CFinney The Way of Salvation

Charles Finney

The Way of Salvation

By Charles Finney

Preface

Sermon I - The Rule by Which Guilt of Sin is Estimated

Sermon II - The Self-Hardening Sinner's Doom

Sermon III - The Loss When a Soul is Lost

Sermon IV - God's Anger Against the Wicked

Sermon V - Men Invited To Reason Together With God

Sermon VI - Conscience and the Bible in Harmony

Sermon VII - Salvation Difficult to the Christian, Impossible to the Sinner

Sermon VIII - The Salvation of Sinners Impossible

Sermon IX - Any One Form of Sin Persisted In is Fatal to the Soul

Sermon X - The Wrath of God Against Those Who Withstand His Truth

Sermon XI - The Doom of Those Who Neglect So Great Salvation

Sermon XII - All Things For Good To Those That Love God

Sermon XIII - All Things Conspire For Evil to the Sinner

Sermon XIV - God Has No Pleasure in the Sinner's Death

Sermon XV - The Rich Man and Lazarus

Sermon XVI - The Wants of Man and Their Supply

Sermon XVII - On Believing With The Heart

Sermon XVIII - On Being Holy

Sermon XIX - On Self Denial

Sermon XX - On Following Christ

Sermon XXI - Conditions of Prevailing Prayer

Sermon XXII - An Approving Heart Confidence in Prayer

Sermon XXIII - On Praying Always

Sermon XXIV - On Prayer for the Holy Spirit

Sermon XXV - Afflictions of the Righteous and the Wicked Contrasted

THE WAY OF SALVATION

Sermons

By

REV. CHARLES G. FINNEY

Late President of Oberlin College

1896

This is 100% Finney with no deletions or additions.

PREFACE.

THE continued interest manifested by the Christian public in the sermons of President Finney, which were first published now nearly sixty years ago, bears testimony to the vigour of his reasoning and to the grace and unction of his expression. During this century at least, he has had no equal as an interpreter and preacher of the Gospel. The audiences which he moved and guided to the acceptance of the truth, always included many persons of the highest intellectual order. So clear was his conception of the truth, that he was unable to utter an obscure sentence. So profound was his conviction of the justice and love of God, and of the unreasonableness and folly of sin, that he could not but speak with inspiring eloquence when beseeching men to be reconciled to their Lord and Saviour.

Many of the sermons collected in this volume we remember to have heard from the preacher's own lips. It is, of course, impossible through the medium of the printed page to reproduce all the marvelous power attending the sermons in their original delivery. But Professor Cowles was a sympathetic reporter, and had long practice in writing out the discourses of the great preacher he so much admired, and thus was able to present a remarkably correct report. As an additional guarantee of faithful representation, the reports were read by Professor Cowles to President Finney before their original publication in the *Oberlin Evangelist*, and so have upon them the stamp of the preacher's own approval.

The sermons of the present volume were selected by Professor Cowles and

arranged for publication before his death, and they are now given to the public under the conviction that they present with unrivalled clearness phases of truth in need of special emphasis at the present time, and that they have permanent value both as models for the preacher and as sound philosophical discussions of many of the central themes of the Gospel. President Finney had the rare ability of so interpreting the divine plan of salvation as at once to instruct the theologian and to bring its moving thoughts to bear with all their power upon the hearts of the common people. We rejoice in the larger circulation which the present form of publication will give to this selection of sermons. Through the columns of the *Oberlin Evangelist* they reached a highly appreciative circle of readers in their day. It augurs well that in their present form they are likely to reach many thousand more, and to have a larger share in moulding the theological thought of the present generation.

G. FREDERICK WRIGHT.

I. THE RULE BY WHICH THE GUILT OF SIN IS ESTIMATED.

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." -- Acts 17:30, 31.

THE text declares that God will judge the world in righteousness. I shall not at this time dwell on the *fact* that God will judge the world, nor upon the fact that this judgment will be in righteousness; but shall endeavour to ascertain what is the rule by which our guilt is to be measured; or in other words what is implied in judging the world in righteousness. What is the righteous rule by which guilt is measured, and consequently the just punishment of the sinner allotted?

In pursuing this subject, I shall deem it important:

I. TO STATE BRIEFLY WHAT THE CONDITIONS OF MORAL OBLIGATION ARE; and

II. COME DIRECTLY TO THE MAIN POINT, THE RULE BY WHICH GUILT IS TO BE MEASURED.

I. *State briefly what the conditions of moral obligation are*.

1. Moral obligation has respect to the ultimate intention of the mind. The end had in view, and not the mere external act, must evermore be that to which law pertains and of which guilt is predicated. Surely guilt cannot be predicated of the outward act merely, apart from intention: for if the outward act be not according to the intention, as in the case of accidents, we never think of imputing guilt; and if it be according to the intention, we always, when we act rationally, ascribe the guilt to the intention, and not to the mere hand or tongue, which became the mind's organ in its wickedness.

This is a principle which everybody admits when he understands it. The thing itself lies among the intuitive affirmations of every child's mind. No sooner has a child the first idea of right and wrong, but he will excuse himself from blame by saying that he did not mean to do it, and he knows full well, that if this excuse be true it is valid and good as an excuse; and moreover he knows that you and

everybody else both know this and must admit it. This sentiment thus pervades the minds of all men and none can intelligently deny it.

2. Having premised so much, I am prepared to remark that the first condition of moral obligation is the possession of the requisite powers of moral agency. There must be intelligence enough to understand in some measure the value of the end to be chosen or not chosen, else there can be no responsible choice. There must be some degree of sensibility to good sought, or evil shunned; else there never would be any action put forth, or effort made; and there must also be the power of choice between possible courses to be chosen. These are all most manifestly requisites for moral choice, or in other words for responsible moral action and obligation.

3. It is essential to moral obligation that the mind should know in some measure, what it ought to intend. It must have some apprehension of the value of the end to be chosen, else there can be no responsible choice of that end, or responsible neglect to choose it. Everybody must see this, for if the individual when asked, why he did not choose a given end, could answer truly, "I did not know that the end was valuable and worthy of choice"; all men would deem this a valid acquittal from moral delinquency.

4. Supposing the individual to know what he ought to choose, then his obligation to choose it does not grow out of the fact of God's requiring it, but lies in the value of the end to be chosen. I have said that he must perceive the end to be chosen, and in some measure understand its value. This is plain. And this apprehension of its value is that which binds him to choose it. In other words, the moral law which enjoins love, or good willing must be subjectively present to his mind. His mind must have a perception of good which he can will to others, in connection with which a sense of obligation to will it springs up, and this constitutes moral obligation. These are substantially the conditions of moral obligation; the requisite mental powers for moral action; and a knowledge of the intrinsic value of the good of being.

Before leaving this topic, let me remark that very probably, no two creatures in the moral universe have precisely the same degree of intelligence respecting the value of the end they ought to choose; yet shall moral obligation rest upon all these diverse degrees of knowledge, proportioned ever more in degree to the measure of this knowledge which any mind possesses. God alone has infinite and changeless knowledge on this point.

II. *I come now to speak of the rule by which the guilt of refusing to will or intend according to the law of God must be measured*.

1. Negatively, guilt is not to be measured by the fact that God who commands is an infinite being. The measure of guilt has sometimes been made to turn on this fact, and has been accounted infinite because God whose commands it violates is infinite. But this doctrine is inadmissible. It lies fatally open to this objection, that by it all sin is made to be equally guilty, because all sin is equally committed against an infinite being. But both the Bible and every man's intuitive reason proclaim that all sins are not equally guilty. Hence the measure or rule of their guilt cannot be in the fact of their commission against an infinite being.

2. Guilt cannot be measured by the fact that God's authority against which sin is committed is infinite. Authority is the right to command. No one denies that this in God is infinite. But this fact cannot constitute the measure of guilt, for precisely the reason just given -- namely, that then all sin becomes equally guilty, being all committed against infinite authority; which conclusion is false, and therefore the premises are also.

3. The degree of guilt cannot be estimated by the fact that all sin is committed against an infinitely holy and good being; for reasons of the same kind as just given.

4. Nor from the value of the law of which sin is a transgression; for though all admit that the law is infinitely good and valuable, yet since it is always equally so, all sin by this rule must be equally guilty -- a conclusion which being false, vitiates and sets aside our premises.

5. The rule cannot lie in the value of that which the law requires us to will, intend or choose, considered apart from the mind's perception of the value; for the intrinsic value of this end is always the same, so that this rule too, as the preceding, would bring us to the conclusion that all sins are equally guilty.

6. Guilt is not to be measured by the tendency of sin. All sin tends to one result -- unmingled evil. No created being can tell what sins have the most direct and powerful tendency to produce evil; since all sin tends to produce evil and only evil continually. Every modification of sin may for aught we know tend with equal directness to the same result -- evil, and nothing but evil.

7. Guilt cannot be measured by the design or ultimate intention of the sinner. It does indeed lie in his design and in nothing else; yet you cannot determine the amount of it by merely knowing his design; for this design is always substantially the same thing -- it is always self-gratification in some form, and nothing else. We need to get this idea thoroughly into our minds. The general design of the sinner being always self-gratification, and it making very little if any difference in his guilt what form of self-gratification he chooses, it follows that the measure of guilt cannot be sought here, and must therefore be sought elsewhere.

8. But it is time I should state, positively, that guilt is always to be estimated by the degree of light under which the sinful intention is formed, or in other words, it is to be measured by the mind's knowledge or perception of the value of that end which the law requires to be chosen. This end is the highest well-being of God and of the universe. This is of infinite value; and in some sense every moral agent must know it to be of infinite value, and yet individuals may differ indefinitely in respect to the degree of clearness with which this great end is apprehended by the mind. Choosing this end -- the highest well-being of God and of the universe -- always implies the rejection of self-interest as an end; and on the other hand, the choice of self-interest or self-gratification as an end always and necessarily implies the rejection of the highest well-being of God and of the universe as an end. The choice of either implies the rejection of its opposite.

Now the sinfulness of a selfish choice consists not merely in its choice of good to self, but in its implying a rejection of the highest well-being of God and of the universe as a supreme and ultimate end. If selfishness did not imply the apprehension and rejection of other and higher interests as an end, it would not imply any guilt at all. The value of the interests rejected is that in which the guilt consists. In others words, the guilt consists in rejecting the infinitely valuable well-being of God and of the universe for the sake of selfish gratification.

Now it is plain that the amount of guilt is as the mind's apprehension of the value of the interests rejected. In some sense, as I have said, every moral agent has and must of necessity have the idea that the interests of God and of the universe are of infinite value. He has this idea, developed so clearly that every sin he commits deserves endless punishment, and yet the degree of his guilt may be greatly enhanced by additional light, so that he may deserve punishment not only

endless in duration but indefinitely great in degree. Nor is there any contradiction in this. If the sinner cannot affirm that there is any limit to the value of the interests he refuses to will and to pursue, he cannot of course affirm that there is any limit to his guilt and desert of punishment. This is true and must be true of every sin and of every sinner; and yet as light increases and the mind gains a clearer apprehension of the infinite value of the highest well-being of God and of the universe, just in that proportion does the guilt of sin increase. Hence the measure of knowledge possessed of duty and its motives, is always and unalterably the rule by which guilt is to be measured.

The proof of this is twofold.

1. *The Scriptures assume and affirm it*.

The text affords a plain instance. The apostle alludes to those past ages when the heathen nations had no written revelation of God, and remarks that "those times of ignorance God winked at." This does not mean that God connived at their sin because of their darkness, but does mean that he passed over it with comparatively slight notice, regarding it as sin of far less aggravation than those which men would now commit if they turned away when God commanded them all to repent. True, sin is never absolutely a light thing; but comparatively, some sins incur small guilt when compared with the great guilt of other sins. This is implied in our text.

I next cite James 4:17. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." This plainly implies that knowledge is indispensable to moral obligation; and even more than this is implied; namely, that the guilt of any sinner is always equal to the amount of his knowledge on the subject. It always corresponds to the mind's perception of the value of the end which should have been chosen, but is rejected. If a man knows he ought in any given case to do good, and yet does not do it, to him this is sin -- the sin plainly lying in the fact of not doing good when he knew he could do it, and being measured as to its guilt by the degree of that knowledge.

John 9:41 -- "Jesus said unto them, if ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth." Here Christ asserts that men without knowledge would be without sin; and that men who have knowledge, and sin notwithstanding, are held guilty. This plainly affirms that the presence of light or knowledge is requisite to the existence of sin, and obviously implies that

the amount of knowledge possessed is the measure of the guilt of sin.

It is remarkable that the Bible everywhere assumes first truths. It does not stop to prove them, or even assert them -- it always assumes their truth, and seems to assume that every one knows and will admit them. As I have been recently writing on moral government and studying the Bible as to its teachings on this class of subjects, I have been often struck with this remarkable fact.

John 15:22, 24 -- "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sins. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hateth both me and my Father." Christ holds the same doctrine here as in the last passage cited -- light essential to constitute sin, and the degree of light, constituting the measure of its aggravation. Let it be observed, however, that Christ probably did not mean to affirm in the absolute sense that if he had not come, the Jews would have had *no sin*; for they would have had some light if he had not come. He speaks as I suppose comparatively. Their sin if he had not come would have been so much less as to justify his strong language.

Luke 12:47, 48 -- "And that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Here we have the doctrine laid down and the truth assumed that men shall be punished according to knowledge. To whom much light is given, of him shall much obedience be required. This is precisely the principle that God requires of men according to the light they have.

1 Tim. 1:13 -- "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Paul had done things intrinsically as bad as well they could be; yet his guilt was far less because he did them under the darkness of unbelief; hence he obtained mercy, when otherwise, he might not. The plain assumption is that his ignorance abated from the malignity of his sin, and favoured his obtaining mercy.

In another passage (Acts 26:9), Paul says of himself -- "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." This had everything to do with the degree of his guilt in rejecting the Messiah, and also with his obtaining pardon.

Luke 23:34 -- "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." This passage presents to us the suffering Jesus, surrounded with Roman soldiers and malicious scribes and priests, yet pouring out his prayer for them, and making the only plea in their behalf which could be made -- "*for they know not what they do*." This does not imply that they had no guilt, for if that were true they would not have needed forgiveness; but it did imply that their guilt was greatly palliated by their ignorance. If they had known him to be the Messiah, their guilt might have been unpardonable.

Matt. 11:20-24 -- "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazine, woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee." But why does Christ thus upbraid these cities? Why denounce so fearful a woe on Chorazin and Capernaum? Because most of his mighty works had been wrought there. His oft-repeated miracles which proved him the Messiah had been wrought before their eyes. Among them he had taught daily, and in their synagogues every Sabbath day. They had great light; hence their great -- their unsurpassed guilt. Not even the men of Sodom had guilt to compare with theirs. The city most exalted, even as it were to heaven, must be brought down to the deepest hell. Guilt and punishment, evermore, according to light enjoyed but resisted.

Luke 11:47-51 -- "Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was

shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation. From the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation." Now here, I ask, on what principle was it that all the blood of martyred prophets ever since the world began was required of that generation? Because they deserved it; for God does no such thing as injustice. It never was known that He punished any people or any individual beyond their desert.

But why and how did they deserve this fearful and augmented visitation of the wrath of God for past centuries of persecution?

The answer is twofold: *they sinned against accumulated light: and they virtually endorsed all the persecuting deeds of their fathers*, and concurred most heartily in their guilt. They had all the oracles of God. The whole history of the nation lay in their hands. They knew the blameless and holy character of those prophets who had been martyred; they could read the guilt of their persecutors and murderers. Yet under all this light, themselves go straight on and perpetrate deeds of the same sort, but of far deeper malignity.

Again, in doing this they virtually endorse all that their fathers did. Their conduct towards the Man of Nazareth, put into words would read thus, "The holy men whom God sent to teach and rebuke our fathers, they maliciously traduced and put to death; *they did right*, and we will do the same thing towards Christ." Now it was not possible for them to give a more decided sanction to the bloody deeds of their fathers. They underwrote for every crime -- assume upon their own consciences all the guilt of their fathers. *In intention*, they do those deeds over again. They say, "If we had lived then we should have done and sanctioned all they did."

On the same principle the accumulated guilt of all the blood and miseries of slavery since the world began rests on this nation now. The guilt involved in every pang, every tear, every blood-drop forced out by the knotted scourge -- all lies at the door of this generation. Why? Because the history of all the past is before the pro-slavery men of this generation, and they endorse the whole by persisting in the practice of the same system and of the same wrongs. No generation before us ever had the light on the evils and the wrongs of Slavery that we have; hence our guilt exceeds that of any former generation of slave-holders; and, moreover, knowing all the cruel wrongs and miseries of the system from the history of the past, every persisting slave-holder endorses all the crimes

and assumes all the guilt involved in the system and evolved out of it since the world began.

Rom. 7:13 -- "Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, worketh death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." The last clause of this verse brings out clearly the principle that under the light which the commandment, that is, the law, affords, sin becomes exceedingly guilty. This is the very principle, which, we have seen, is so clearly taught and implied in numerous passages of Scripture.

The diligent reader of the Bible knows that these are only a part of the texts which teach the same doctrine; we need not adduce any more.

2. I remark that this is the rule and the only just rule by which the guilt of sin can be measured. If I had time to turn the subject over and over -- time to take up every other conceivable supposition -- I could show that none of them can possibly be true. No supposition can abide a close examination except this, that the rule or measure of guilt is the mind's knowledge pertaining to the value of the end to be chosen.

There can be no other criterion by which guilt can be measured. It is the value of the end chosen which constitutes sin guilty, and the mind's estimate of that value measures its own guilt. This is true according to the Bible as we have seen; and every man needs only consult his own consciousness faithfully and he will see that it is equally affirmed by the mind's own intuition to be right.

A few *inferences* may be drawn from our doctrine.

1. Guilt is not to be measured by the *nature* of the intention; for sinful intention is always a unit -- always one and the same thing -- being nothing more nor less than self-gratification.

2. Nor can it be measured by the particular type of self-gratification which the mind may prefer. No matter which of his numerous appetites or propensities man may choose to indulge -- whether for food, for strong drink -- for power, pleasure or gain -- it is the same thing in the end -- self-gratification, and nothing else. For the sake of this he sacrifices every other conflicting interest, and herein lies his guilt. Yet since he tramples on the greater good of others with equal recklessness, whatever type of self-gratification he prefers, it is plain that we

cannot find in this type any true measure of his guilt.

3. Nor again is the guilt to be decided by the amount of evil which the sin may bring into the universe. An agent not enlightened may introduce great evil and yet no guilt attach to this agent. This is true of evil often done by brute animals. It is true of the mischiefs effected by alcohol. In fact it matters not how much or how little evil may result from the misdeeds of a moral agent, you cannot determine the amount of his guilt from this circumstance. God may overrule the greatest sin so that but little evil shall result from it, or he may leave its tendencies uncounteracted so that great evils shall result from the least sin. Who can tell how much or how little overruling agency may interpose between any sin great or small and its legitimate results?

Satan sinned in betraying Judas, and Judas sinned in betraying Christ. Yet God so overruled these sins that most blessed results to the universe followed from Christ's betrayal and consequent death. Shall the sins of Satan and Judas be estimated by the evils actually resulting from them? If it should appear that the good immensely overbalanced the evil, does their sin thereby become holiness -- meritorious holiness? Is their guilt at all the less for God's wisdom and love in overruling it for good? It is not therefore the amount of resulting good or evil which determines the amount of guilt, but is the degree of light enjoyed, under which the sin is committed.

4. Nor again can guilt be measured by the common opinions of men. Men associated in society are wont to form among themselves a sort of public sentiment which becomes a standard for estimating guilt; yet how often is it erroneous? Christ warns us against adopting this standard, and also against ever judging according to the outward appearance. Who does not know that the common opinions of men are exceedingly incorrect? It is indeed wonderful to see how far they diverge in all directions from the Bible standard.

5. The amount of guilt can be determined, as I have said, only by the degree in which those ideas are developed which throw light upon obligation. Just here sin lies, in resisting the light and acting in opposition to it, and therefore the degree of light should naturally measure the amount of guilt incurred.

REMARKS.

1. We see from this subject the principle on which many passages of Scripture

are to be explained. It might seem strange that Christ should charge the blood of all the martyred prophets of past ages on that generation. But the subject before us reveals the principle upon which this is done and ought to be done.

Whatever of apparent mystery may attach to the fact declared in our text, "The times of this ignorance God winked at" -- finds in our subject an adequate explanation. Does it seem strange that for ages God should pass over almost without apparent notice the monstrous and reeking abominations of the Heathen world? The reason is found in their ignorance. Therefore God winks at those odious and cruel idolatries. For all, taken together, are a trifle compared with the guilt of a single generation of enlightened men.

2. One sinner may be in such circumstances as to have more light and knowledge than the whole Heathen world. Alas! how little the Heathen know! How little compared with what is known by sinners in this land, even by very young sinners!

Let me call up and question some impenitent sinner of Oberlin. It matters but little who -- let it be any Sabbath-school child.

What do you know about God?

I know that there is one God and only one. The Heathen believe there are hundreds of thousands.

What do you know about this God?

I know that he is infinitely great and good. But the Heathen thinks some of his gods are both mean and mischievous -- wicked as can be and the very patrons of wickedness among men.

What do you know about salvation?

I know that God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son to die that whosoever would believe in him might live for ever. Oh! the Heathen never heard of that. They would faint away methinks in amazement if they should hear and really believe the startling, glorious fact. And that Sabbath-school child knows that God gives his Spirit to convince of sin. He has perhaps often been sensible of the presence and power of that Spirit. But the Heathen know nothing of this.

You too know that you are immortal -- that beyond death there is still a conscious unchanging state of existence, blissful or wretched according to the deeds done here. But the Heathen have no just ideas on this subject. It is to them as if all were a blank.

The amount of it then is that you know everything -- the Heathen almost nothing. You know all you need to know to be saved, to be useful -- to honour God and serve your generation according to his will. The Heathen sit in deep darkness, wedded to their abominations, groping, yet finding nothing.

As your light therefore, so is your guilt immeasurably greater than theirs. Be it so that their idolatries are monstrous -- your guilt in your impenitence under the light you have is vastly more so. See that Heathen mother dragging her shrieking child and tumbling it into the Ganges! See her rush with another to throw him into the burning arms of Moloch. Mark: see that pile of wood flashing, lifting up its lurid flames toward heaven. Those men are dragging a dead husband -- they heave his senseless corpse upon that burning pile. There comes the widow -- her hair disheveled and flying -- gaily festooned for such a sacrifice; she dances on; she rends the air with her howls and her wailings; she shrinks and yet she does not shrink -- she leaps on the pile, and the din of music with the yell of spectators buries her shrieks of agony; she is gone! Oh! my blood curdles and runs cold in my veins; my hair stands on end; I am horrified with such scenes -- but what shall we say of their guilt? Ah yes! what do they know of God -- of worship -- of the claims of God upon their heart and life? Ah! you may well spare your censure of the Heathen for their fearful orgies of cruelty and lust, and give it where light has been enjoyed and resisted.

3. You see then that often a sinner in some of our congregations may know more than all the Heathen world know. If this be true, what follows from it as to the amount of his comparative guilt? This inevitably, *that such a sinner deserves a direr and deeper damnation than all the Heathen world!* This conclusion may seem startling; but how can we escape from it? We cannot escape. It is as plain as any mathematical demonstration. This is the principle asserted by Christ when he said, "That servant which knew his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." How solemn and how pungent the application of this doctrine would be in this congregation! I could call out many a sinner in this place and show him

that beyond question his guilt is greater than that of all the Heathen world. Yet how few ever estimated their own guilt thus.

Not long since an ungodly young man, trained in this country, wrote back from the Sandwich Islands a glowing and perhaps a just description of their horrible abominations, moralizing on their monstrous enormities and thanking God that he had been born and taught in a Christian land. Indeed! he might well have spared this censure of the dark-minded Heathen. His own guilt in remaining an impenitent sinner under all the light of Christian America was greater than the whole aggregate guilt of all those Islands.

So we may all well spare our expressions of abhorrence at the guilty abominations of idolatry. You are often perhaps saying in your heart, why does God endure these horrid abominations another day? See that rolling car of juggernaut. Its wheels move axle deep in the gushing blood and crushed bones of its deluded worshippers! And yet God looks on and no red bolt leaps from his right hand to smite such wickedness. They are indeed guilty; but Oh, how small their guilt compared with the guilt of those who know their duty perfectly, yet never do it! God sees their horrible abominations, yet does he wink at them because they are done in so much ignorance

But see that impenitent sinner. Convicted of his sin under the clear gospel light that shines all around him, he is driven to pray. He knows he ought to repent, and almost thinks he wants to, and will try. Yet still he clings to his sins, and will not give up his heart to God. Still he holds his heart in a state of impenitence. Now mark here; his sin in thus withholding his heart from God under so much light, involves greater guilt than all the abominations of the Heathen world. Put together the guilt of all those widows who immolate themselves on the funeral pile -- of those who hurl their children into the Ganges, or into the burning arms of Moloch -- all does not begin to approach the guilt of that convicted sinner's prayer who comes before God under the pressure of his conscience, and prays a heartless prayer, determined all the while to withhold his heart from God. Oh! why does this sinner thus tempt God, and thus abuse his love, and thus trample on his known authority? Oh! that moment of impenitence, while his prayers are forced by conscience from his burning lips, and yet he will not yield the controversy with his Maker -- that moment involves direr guilt than rests on all the Heathen world together! He knows more than they all, yet sins despite of all his knowledge. The many stripes belong to him -- the few to them.

4. This leads me to remark again, that the Christian world may very well spare their revilings and condemnations of the Heathen. Of all the portions of earth's population, Christendom is infinitely the most guilty Christendom, where the gospels peal from ten thousand pulpits -- where its praises are sung by a thousand choirs, but where many thousand hearts that know God and duty, refuse either to reverence the one or perform the other! All the abominations of the Heathen world are a mere trifle compared with the guilt of Christendom. We may look down upon the filth and meanness and degradation of a Heathen people, and feel a most polite disgust at the spectacle -- and far be it from me, to excuse these degrading, filthy or cruel practices; but how small their light, and consequently their guilt, compared with our own! We therefore ask the Christian world to turn away from the spectacle of Heathen degradation, and look nearer home, upon the spectacle of Christian guilt! Let us look upon ourselves.

5. Again, let us fear not to say what you must all see to be true, that the nominal church is the most guilty part of Christendom. It cannot for a moment be questioned, that the church has more light than any other portion; therefore has she more guilt. Of course I speak of the nominal church -- not the real church whom he has pardoned and cleansed from her sins. But in the nominal church, think of the sins that live and riot in their corruption. See that backslider? He has tasted the waters of life. He has been greatly enlightened. Perhaps he has really known the Lord by true faith -- and then see, he turns away to beg the husks of earthly pleasure! He turns his back on the bleeding Lamb! Now, put together all the guilt of every Heathen soul that has gone to hell -- of every soul that has gone from a state of utter moral darkness, and your guilt, backsliding Christian, is greater than all theirs!

Do you, therefore, say, may God then, have mercy on my soul? So say we all; but we must add if *it be possible*; for who can say that such guilt as yours can be forgiven! Can Christ pray for you as he prayed for his murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?" Can he plead in your behalf, that you knew not what you were doing? Awful! awful! Where is the sounding line that shall measure the ocean-depth of your guilt?

6. Again, if our children remain in sin, we may cease to congratulate ourselves that they were not born in Heathenism or slavery! How often have I done this! How often, as I have looked upon my sons and daughters, have I thanked God that they were not born to be thrown into the burning arms of a Moloch, or to be

crushed under the wheels of juggernaut! But if they will live in sin, we must suspend our self-congratulations for their having Christian light and privileges. If they will not repent, it were infinitely better for them to have been born in the thickest Pagan darkness -- better to have been thrown in their tender years into the Ganges, or into the fires which idolatry kindles -- better be anything else, or suffer anything earthly, than have the gospel's light only to shut it out and go to hell despite of its admonitions.

Let us not, then, be hasty in congratulating ourselves, as if this great light enjoyed by us and by our children, were of course a certain good to them; but this we may do -- we may rejoice that God will honour himself -- his mercy if he can, and his justice if he must. God will be honoured, and we may glory in this. But Oh, the sinner, the sinner! Who can measure the depth of his guilt, or the terror of his final doom! It will be more tolerable for all the Heathen world together than for you.

7. It is time that we all understood this subject fully, and appreciated all its bearings. It is no doubt true, that however moral our children may be, they are more guilty than any other sinners under heaven, if they live in sin, and will not yield to the light under which they live. We may be perhaps congratulating ourselves on their fair morality; but if we saw their case in all its real bearings, our souls would groan with agony -- our bowels would be all liquid with anguish -- our very hearts within us would heave as if volcanic fires were kindled there -- so deep a sense should we have of their fearful guilt and of the awful doom they incur in denying the Lord that bought them and setting at naught a known salvation. Oh! if we ever pray, we should pour out our prayers for our offspring as if nothing could ever satisfy us or stay our importunity, but the blessings of a full salvation realised in their souls.

Let the mind contemplate the guilt of these children. I could not find a Sabbath-school child, perhaps not one in all Christendom, who could not tell me more of God's salvation than all the Heathen world know. That dear little boy who comes from his Sabbath school knows all about the gospel. He is almost ready to be converted, but not quite ready; yet that little boy, if he knows his duty and yet will not do it, is covered with more guilt than all the Heathen world together. Yes, that boy, who goes alone and prays, yet holds back his heart from God, and then his mother comes and prays over him, and pours her tears on his head, and his little heart almost melts, and he seems on the very point of giving up his

whole heart to the Saviour; yet if he will not do it, he commits more sin in that refusal than all the sin of all the Heathen world -- his guilt is more than the guilt of all the murders, all the drownings of children, and burnings of widows, and deeds of cruelty and violence in all the Heathen world. All this combination of guilt shall not be equal to the guilt of the lad who knows his duty, but will not yield his heart to its righteous claims.

8. "The Heathen," says an apostle, "sin without law, and shall therefore perish, without law." In their final doom they will be cast away from God; this will be perhaps about all. The bitter reflection, "I had the light of the gospel and would not yield to it. I knew all my duty, yet did not" this cannot be a part of their eternal doom. This is reserved for those who gather themselves into our sanctuaries and around our family altars, yet will not serve their own Infinite Father.

9. One more remark. Suppose I should call out a sinner by name -- one of the sinners of this congregation, a son of pious parents -- and should call up the father also. I might say, Is this your son? Yes. What testimony can you bear about this son of yours? I have endeavoured to teach him all the ways of the Lord. Son, what can you say? I know my duty. I have heard it a thousand times. I know I ought to repent, but I never would.

Oh! if we understood this matter in all its bearings, it would fill every bosom with consternation and grief. How would our bowels hum and heave as a volcano! There would be one universal outcry of anguish and terror at the awful guilt and fearful doom of such a sinner!

Young man, are you going away this day in your sins? Then, what angel can compute your guilt? Oh! how long has Jesus held out his hands, yes, his bleeding hands, and besought you to look and live! A thousand times, and in countless varied ways has he called, but you have refused; stretched out his hands, and you have not regarded. Oh! why will you not repent? Why not say at once, It is enough that I have sinned so long! I cannot live so any longer! O *sinner, why will you live so?* Would you go down to hell -- ah, to the deepest hell -- where, if we would find you, we must work our way down a thousand years through ranks of lost spirits less guilty than you, ere we could reach the fearful depth to which you have sunk? O sinner, what a hell is that which can adequately punish such guilt as thine!

II. THE SELF-HARDENING SINNER'S DOOM.

"He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." -- Proverbs 29:1.

IN discussing this subject I will consider:

I. WHEN AND HOW PERSONS ARE REPROVED;

II. GOD'S DESIGN IN REPROVING SINNERS;

III. WHAT IT IS TO HARDEN THE NECK;

IV. WHAT IS INTENDED BY THE SINNER'S BEING SUDDENLY DESTROYED; and

V. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN ITS BEING WITHOUT REMEDY.

I. *When and how persons are reproved*.

God's reproof of sinners may properly be considered as embracing three distinct departments; namely, reproof by means of *his word*, by means of his *providence*, and through his *Spirit*. My limits will allow me to make only a few suggestions under each of these heads.

1. God reproves the sinner by his word whenever he in any way presents truth to his mind through his word, which shows the sinner his sins, which reveals to him duties that he is not performing. Any such revelation of duties not done, and of sins positively committed, is reproof from God. Suppose you are a parent, and you point out to your child some neglect of duty. You by this act reprove your child. There may be connected with this some degree of threatening explicitly announced, or there may not be; in either case it is reproof: for it must always be understood that threatening is involved. Hence if you call the attention of your child to anything in his conduct which displeases you, this very act is reproof. So when God by the revealed truth of his word calls the sinner's attention to the fact of sin, he virtually reproves him, and this is God's intention in calling his mind to the fact of his sin.

2. By God's providence sinners are reproved, when their selfish projects are defeated. Sinful men are continually planning selfish schemes, and God often through his providence frustrates those schemes; and does so for the very

purpose of reproving their projectors. He could not rebuke them in a more emphatic way than this.

Sinners often frame *ambitious* projects. The student seeks for himself a great name as a scholar; in other spheres, men seek the renown of the warrior, or the civilian -- their aspiration being to enroll their names high above their fellows on the pillar of fame; but God in his providence blasts their hopes, frustrates their plans, and would fain make them see that they had better by far get their names written in the Lamb's book of life. So he blots out their name on Ambition's scroll as fast as they can write it there -- as if he would show them their folly, and allure them to write it where no power can ever erase it.

Again, it often happens that men by means of their selfishness become involved in difficulty; perhaps by a selfish use of their property, or by a selfish indulgence of their tongues; and God springs his net upon them and suddenly they are taken, and find themselves suddenly brought up to *think* of their ways, and to experience the mischiefs of their selfish schemes. How often do we see this! Men make haste to be rich, and start some grasping scheme of selfishness for this purpose; but God suddenly springs his net upon them -- blasts their schemes, and sets them to thinking whether there be not "a God in heaven who minds the affairs of men."

Another man finds himself entangled in lawsuits, and his property melts away like an April snow; and another pushes into some hazardous speculation -- till the frown of the Almighty rebukes his folly.

As men have a thousand ways to develop their selfishness, so God has a thousand ways to head them back in their schemes and suggest forcibly to their minds that "this their way is their folly." In all such cases men ought to regard themselves as taken in the net of God's providence. God meets them in the narrow way of their selfishness, to talk with them about the vanity and folly of their course.

Everything which is adapted to arrest the attention of men in their sins may be regarded as a providential reproof. Thus, when God comes among sinners and cuts down some of their companions in iniquity, how solemn often are those dispensations! Often have I had opportunity to notice these effects. Often have I seen how solemn the minds of sinners become under these reproofs of the Almighty. Their feelings become tender; their sensibilities to truth are strongly

excited. Who can fail to see that such events are designed to arrest the attention, and to rebuke and reprove them in their course of sin?

Every obstacle which God in his providence interposes in your way of selfishness, is *his* reproof. You can regard it in no other light.

God sometimes reproves sinners in a way which may be deemed more pungent than any other. I allude to that way which the Bible describes as heaping coals of fire on an enemy's head. A man abuses you; and in retaliation you do him all the good in your power. Glorious retaliation! How it pours the scorching lava on his head! Now God often does this very thing with sinners. They sin against him most abusively and most outrageously; and what does he do? How does he retaliate upon them? Only by pouring out upon them a yet richer flood of mercies! He pours new blessings into their lap till it runs over. He prospers their efforts for property, enlarges their families like a flock, and smiles on everything to which they put their hand. Oh, how strangely do these mercies contrast with the sinner's abuse of his great Benefactor!

I can recollect some cases of this sort in my own experience, when the deep consciousness of guilt made me apprehend some great judgments from God. But just then, God seemed in a most remarkable manner to reveal his kindness and his love, and to show the great meekness of his heart. Oh, what a rebuke of my sins was this! Could anything else so break my heart all to pieces? Who does not know the power of kindness to melt the heart?

So God rebukes the sinner for his sins, and seeks to subdue his hard heart by manifested love.

Often sickness is to be regarded as a rebuke from God. When persons for selfish purposes abuse their health and God snatches it away, he in a most forcible way rebukes them for their madness.

Sometimes he brings the lives of men into great peril, so that there shall be but a step between them and death; as if he would give this movement of his providence a voice of trumpet-power to forewarn them of their coming doom. So various and striking are the ways of God's providence in which he reproves men for their sins.

3. God also reproves men by his Spirit. According to our Saviour's teachings, the Spirit shall "reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." Hence

when sinners are specially convicted of sin they should know that God has come in his own person to reprove them. His spirit comes to their very hearts, and makes impressions of truth and duty there -- revealing to the sinner his own heart, and showing him how utterly at variance it is with a heart full of divine love.

Again, I have no doubt that in the present as in former days God reproves men of their sins by means of dreams. If all the reliable cases of this sort which have occurred since the Bible was completed were recorded, I doubt not they would fill many volumes. I am aware that some suppose this mode of divine operation upon the human mind has long ago ceased; but I think otherwise. It may have ceased to be a medium of revealing new truth -- doubtless it has; but it has not ceased to be employed as a means of impressing and enforcing truth already revealed. Sometimes the great realities of the coming judgment and of the world of doom are brought out and impressed upon the mind with overwhelming force by means of dreams. When this is the case, who shall say that the hand of the Lord is not in it?

A striking instance of a dream in which the hand of the Lord may be seen, is related by President Edwards. One of his neighbours, an intemperate man, dreamed that he died and went to hell. I will not attempt to relate here the circumstances that according to his dream occurred there. Suffice it to say that he obtained permission to return to earth on probation for one year, and was told distinctly that if he did not reform within one year, he must come back again. Upon this he awaked, under most solemn impressions of the dreadful realities of the sinner's hell. That very morning he went to see his pastor, Pres. Edwards, who said to him, "This is a solemn warning from God to your soul. You must give heed to it and forsake your sins, or you are a ruined man for eternity." The man made very solemn promises. When he had retired, Edwards opened his journal and made an entry of the principal facts: the dream, the conversation, and of course the *date* of these events. The inebriate reformed and ran well for a time; attended church and seemed serious; but long before the year came round, he relapsed, returned to his cups, and ultimately in a fit of intoxication opened a chamber door in a shop which led down an outside stairway -- pitched headlong and broke his neck. Pres. Edwards turned to his journal and found that the one year from the date of his dream came round that very night, and the man's appointed time was up!

Now it is no doubt true that in general, dreams are under the control of physical law, and follow, though with much irregularity, the strain of our waking reveries; and for this reason many persons will not believe the hand of the Lord ever works in them; yet their inference is by no means legitimate; for God certainly *can* put his Hand upon the mind dreaming as well as upon the mind waking, and multitudes of instances in point show that he sometimes does.

Again, God reproves the sinner whenever his Spirit awakens in the mind a sense of the great danger of living in sin. I have often known sinners greatly affected with the thought of this danger -- the terrible danger of passing along through life in sin, exposed every hour to an eternal and remediless hell.

Now these solemn impressions are God's kind warnings, impressed on the soul because he loves the sinner's well-being, and would fain save him if he wisely can.

Often God's Spirit gives sinners a most impressive view of the shortness of time. He makes them feel that this general truth applies in all its power *to themselves* -- that their own time is short, and that they in all probability have not long to live. I am aware that this impression sometimes originates in one's state of health; but I also know that sometimes there is good reason to recognise God's own special hand in it; and that men sometimes ascribe to nervous depression of spirits what should be ascribed directly to God himself.

Again, God often makes the impression that the present is the sinner's last opportunity to secure salvation. I know not how many such cases have fallen under my own observation, cases in which sinners have been made to feel deeply that this is to be the very last offer of mercy, and these the very last strivings of the Spirit. My observation has taught me in such cases, to expect that the result will verify the warning -- that this is none other than God's voice, and that God does not lie to man, but teaches most solemn and impressive truth. Oh, how does it become every sinner to listen and heed such timely warnings!

Again, God's Spirit reproves sinners through their particular friends, or through gospel ministers. The affectionate admonitions of a brother or a sister, a parent or a child, a husband or a wife -- how often have these been the vehicle through which God has spoken to the soul! His ministers also, God often employs for this purpose, so directing their minds that they in fact present to the sinner the very truth which fits his case, and he says, "It must be that somebody has told

the minister all about my thoughts and feelings. Who can it be? I have never told anybody half so much of my heart as he has preached today." Now in such cases you may be safe in ascribing the fitting truth to the guiding hand of the divine Spirit. God is making use of his servant to reprove the sinner.

In all such cases as I have now been adducing, the reproofs administered should be ascribed to the Spirit of the Lord. In the same manner as God often in various ways administers consolation to penitent souls; so does he administer reproof to the impenitent. He has a thousand modes of making his voice audible to the sinner's conscience, and in his wisdom he always selects such as he deems best adapted to produce the desired result.

II. *The design of God in reproving sinners*.

One thing aimed at is to press them with the means of reform. A benevolent God sincerely desires their salvation and honestly does all he wisely can to secure this desired result. Hence his oft-repeated reproofs and warnings. He will at least leave them without excuse. They shall never have it to say, "Oh, if we had only been forewarned of danger in those precious hours and years in which salvation was possible!" God designedly forestalls such exclamations by taking away all occasion, and putting in their mouths a very different one, "How have I hated instruction and my heart despised reproof."

For this purpose God forewarns the sinner in season. Take the case of the man who dreamed of going down to hell. This dream was a loud and timely warning, adapted as well perhaps as any warning could be to induce reform and real repentance. It effectually took away all excuse or apology for persisting in his sins.

God designs by these reproofs to prepare men for the solemn judgment. It is in his heart to do them good -- secure their seasonable -- that is, their present, immediate repentance, so that they may meet their God in peace at last. His benevolence prompts him to this course and he pursues it with all his heart.

It is no doubt equally true that the great God designs to be ready himself for the final judgment to meet every sinner there. He foresees that it will be important for him there to show how he has dealt with each sinner -- how often and how faithfully he has acted towards them the part of a kind Father. For this end every reproof ever given to a sinner will come in place. That dream recorded by Pres.

Edwards will then be found recorded also by an angel's pen -- to be revealed before all worlds then and there! This is one step in the process of parental efforts for reclaiming one sinner. The admonition so faithfully given by Pres. Edwards is another. All will go to show that truly God has been "long suffering towards sinners because he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Thus will God in these providential warnings glorify Himself by exhibiting his true character and conduct. Nothing more is ever needful in order to glorify God than that his true character and conduct should be known as it is. The developments brought out at the judgment-day will thus reveal God, and of course will enhance his glory.

It is also interesting to see how God makes one warning create another. One providential event, sent as a judgment upon one sinner, multiplies its warning voice many fold as it falls upon the ears of hosts of other sinners. God cuts down one out of a class of hoary sinners, or of sinners in middle life, or in youth, and the event speaks in notes of solemn warning to hundreds. At Rome, N. Y., several years ago a great revival occurred, the power of which rocked and rent the stout hearts of many sinners, as the forest trees are rocked and rent by a tornado; but with it came some awful judgments revealing another form of the mighty hand of God. There were in that place a small class of hard drinkers who seemed determined to resist every call from God to repent. On the Sabbaths they would get together for drinking and revelling. On one of these occasions, one of their number suddenly fell down dead. Mr. Gillett, pastor of the church in that place, hastened to the spot, found the fallen man yet warm, but actually dead; and turning to the surrounding company of his associates, said, "There -- who of you can doubt that this man has gone right down to hell!" This case made a deep and thrilling impression.

Another man, a famous apostate from a profession of religion, greatly opposed the revival. All at once God smote him with madness, and in his insane ravings he sought to take his own life. Men by turns had to watch him and restrain him by violence from committing suicide. Ere long he died a most horrid death -- an awful warning to hardened apostates of their impending doom! So God tries to reform and save guilty men.

Again, God would manifest the utter madness, recklessness, and folly of sinners. How striking it will appear in the judgment to see such a multitude of cases of

reproof brought out to light, and then in connection to see the folly and madness of sinners in resisting so many reproofs! What a gazing-stock will sinners then be to the gathered myriads of intelligent beings! I have sometimes thought this will be the greatest wonder of the universe, to see the men who have displayed such perfect and long-continued infatuation in resisting so much love and so many kind and most heart-affecting appeals and reproofs! There they will stand monuments of the voluntary infatuation of a self-willed sinner! The intelligent universe will gaze at them as if they were the embodiment of all that is wondrous in madness and folly!

III. *What is it to harden the neck?*

The figure is taken from the effect of the yoke on the bullock. Under constant pressure and friction the skin becomes callous, and past feeling. So with the sinner's conscience. His will has resisted truth until his constant opposition has hardened his moral sensibility, and his will rests in the attitude of rebellion against God. His mind is now fixed; reproofs which have heretofore chafed his sensibilities no longer reach them; friction and resistance have hardened his heart till he is past feeling. No dispensations of providence alarm him; no voice from God disturbs him; under all appeals to his reason or conscience his will is doggedly fixed; his moral feelings are insensible.

In this state, one might well say, the neck is hardened. The figure is pertinent. Who has not seen cases of this sort? Cases of men who have become so hardened that every reproof passes by them as if it touched them not -- as if their moral sensibility had ceased to be any sensibility at all. I was struck the other day in conversing with a man of seventy-five, with his apparent insensibility to religious considerations. "Are you a Christian?" said I. "No; I don't know anything about them things -- what you call Christians. I never murdered anybody, and I guess I have been as honest as most folks in my way." "But are you prepared to enter heaven -- to go into another state of existence, and meet God face to face?" "Oh! I don't believe anything about them things. If I only live about right, that's enough for me." I could make no impression on such a mind as his; but God will make such men know something about these things by and by. They will change their tone ere long!

You sometimes see men in this condition who have given their intelligence up to embrace error, and have of free choice put darkness for light, and light for darkness; have stultified themselves in their own iniquities, and have said to evil,

"Be thou my good." These have a seared conscience and a hard heart; their neck is an iron sinew, and they are fixed and fully set, never to yield to God's most reasonable demands.

What, then, shall God do with such men? The text tells us. They "shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy." This leads me to inquire:

IV. *What is meant by being suddenly destroyed?*

It implies their being cut off *unexpectedly*, in such an hour as they think not. We often speak of things as coming suddenly; not because they come early in life, but because they fall upon men all suddenly and without being at all anticipated. In this sense the term *suddenly* seems to be used in our text. When some awful stroke of God's providence falls suddenly among us, smiting down some sinner in his sins, we say, What a sudden death! What an awful dispensation! So the Bible says, while they cry "Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape." No forewarning is given; no herald with trumpet-call proclaims the coming of that death-shaft; but all suddenly it cuts the air and strikes its blow! It has no need to strike another! Noiseless as the falling dew it comes; with velvet step it enters his bed-chamber; in such forms as no skill or power of man can baffle, it makes its approaches; death raises his bony arm -- poises that never-erring shaft in a moment, *where* is the victim? Gone; but *where?* The Bible says, he is "suddenly destroyed." Does this mean that he is borne up as on a chariot of fire to heaven? Were the wicked men of Sodom and Gomorrah "set forth as an ensample" of the doom of the wicked -- caught away up to heaven in mounting columns of fire and brimstone? If that had been, methinks all heaven would have fainted at the sight! Or were the people of the old world, who had all corrupted their way before God, and who were so full of violence and bloodshed that God could not endure them on earth -- were they all swept by the flood into heaven, while poor Noah, scorned by the men of his generation, must toil many long years to prepare him; an ark to save himself and family from being also *destroyed into heaven?*

What infinite trifling is this with God's words, to say that the sinner's destruction is only taking him by the shortest route and the quickest way to heaven!

Does God say or mean this? No! If it had been his purpose to deceive men, he could not have taken a more direct and certain method than this, of calling the taking of men suddenly to heaven, *destruction! No*, this mode of using language

belongs to Satan and not to God! We should never confound the broad distinction between the God of truth and the Father of lies!

V. *What is meant when this destruction is said to be "without remedy?"*

1. That this destruction cannot be arrested. It comes with resistless and overwhelming power, and seems to mock all efforts made to withstand its progress. A most striking exemplification of this appeared in the *dreadful Cholera* which swept over many of our cities some years ago. I was then in New York City -- an eye-witness and more than an eye-witness of its terrific power. My own system experienced its withering shock. A man of the strongest constitution occupied a room adjacent to mine; was attacked the same hour that I was, and within a few hours was a corpse. Its powerful sweep was appalling. You might as well put forth your hand to stay the tornado in its rush of power as think to withstand this messenger of the Almighty. So with those forms of destruction which come at God's behest to whelm the hardened sinner in destruction. They come with the strides and the momentum of Omnipotence. The awful hand of God is in them, and who can stand before him when once his wrath is moved?

Many other forms of disease, as well as the Cholera, evince the terror of Jehovah's arm. The strong man is bowed low; his physician sits by his bedside, powerless to help; disease mocks all efforts to withstand its progress; human skill can only sit by and chronicle its triumph. God is working, and none but a God could resist.

2. The very language shows that the principal idea of the writer is that this destruction is *endless*. It is *destruction* -- the utter ruin of all good -- the blighting and withering of all happiness for ever. No rescue shall be possible; recovery is hopeless; it is a grave beyond which dawns no resurrection. The destruction wrecks all hope in the common ruin, and in its very terms precludes the idea of remedy. Can you conceive of another element of terror, not already involved and developed in this most dire of all forms of destruction?

REMARKS.

1. We see how to account for the sudden deaths of the wicked that occur often, and what we are to think of them. Some such deaths have occurred here which were exceedingly striking to me. Here we have seen young men, sons of pious

parents, children of many prayers and many warnings; but they waxed hard under reproof; and their days were soon numbered. Away they go and we see them no more. There was one young man who came here to study. He had been warned and prayed for. Perhaps the Lord saw that there was no hope in any further effort. His sickness I can never forget; nor his horror as death drew on apace. Away he passed from the world of hope and mercy. I will not attempt to follow him, nor would I presume to know his final doom; but one thing I know: his companions in sin received in his death a most solemn and awful warning.

2. The danger of wicked men is in proportion to the light they have. Men of great light are much the most likely to be cut off in early life. Of this we have seen some very striking instances in this place. Some young men have been raised here -- were here when I came into the place, and then, in the tender years of childhood and youth they saw their companions converted, and were often affectionately warned themselves. But they seemed to resist every warning and come quick to maturity in moral insensibility. I need not give their names: you knew them once; where are they now? It is not for me to tell where they are; but I can tell where they are not. They are not grown up to bless the church and the world; they did not choose such a course and such an end to their life. They are not here among us. No! the places that knew them once shall know them no more for ever. You may call for them in our College halls; in the sad-hearted families where once they might be found; they respond to no call -- till the blast of the final trumpet. They knew their duty but too well, and but too soon they apparently settled the question that they *would not do it*.

That old man of almost fourscore of whom I spake was not brought up in any Oberlin. His birthplace was in the dark places of the earth, in Canada, where he learned neither to read nor to write. There are children here not ten years old who have forty times as much knowledge on all religious subjects as he. He has lived to become hoary in sin; these children, brought up here, need expect no such thing. Tell me where you can find an old man who has been brought up in the midst of great light, who yet lives long and waxes more and more hard in sin and guilt. Usually such men as sin against great light in their youth will not live out half their days.

3. It is benevolent in God to make his providential judgments in cutting down hardened sinners a means of warning others. Often this is the most impressive warning God can give men. In some cases it is so terrible that sinners have not

even dared to attend the funeral of their smitten associates. They have seemed afraid to go near the awful scene -- so manifest has it been that God's hand is there. In many instances within my personal knowledge the hand of God has cut down in a most horrible manner men who were opposing revivals. I cannot now dwell upon these cases.

4. We may learn to expect the terrible destruction of those who under great light are hardening themselves in sin. I have learned, when I see persons passing through great trials, to keep my eye on them and see if they reform. If they do not, I expect to see them ere long cut down as hopeless cumberers of the ground. Being often reproved yet still hardening their neck, they speedily meet their doom according to the principle of God's government announced in our text.

5. Reproof administered either soon subdues, or rapidly ripens for destruction. This ripening process goes on rapidly in proportion to the pressure with which God follows them with frequent and solemn reproofs. When you see God following the sinner close with frequent reproofs, plying him with one dispensation after another, and all in vain, you may expect the lifted bolt to smite him next and speedily.

6. The nearer destruction is to men, the less as a general thing they fear or expect it. When you hear them cry "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction is at hand and they shall not escape. Just at the time when you are saying, "I never enjoyed better health" -- just then when you are blessing yourself in the prospect of securing your favourite objects, then sudden destruction comes down like an Alpine avalanche, and there is neither time to escape nor strength to resist. How often do you hear it said -- Alas! It was so unexpected, so sudden -- who would have thought this blow was coming! Just when we least of all expected it, it fell with fatal power.

7. Sinners who live under great light are living very fast. Those who are rapidly acquiring knowledge of duty, standing in a focal centre of blazing light, with everything to arouse their attention -- they, unless they yield to this light, must soon live out the short months of their probation. They must soon be converted, or soon pass the point of hope -- the point within which it is morally possible that they shall be renewed. Men may under some circumstances live to the age of seventy and never get so much light as they can in a few days or weeks in some situations. Under one set of circumstances, a sinner might get more light, commit more sin, and become more hardened in a twelve-month than he would

under other circumstances in a life of fourscore years. Under the former circumstances he lives fast. A Sabbath-school child might in this point of view die a hundred years old. The accumulations of a hundred years of sin and guilt and hardness might in his case be made in one short year. Where light is blazing as it has blazed here; where children have line upon line as they are wont to have here, how rapidly they live! How soon do they fill up the allotted years of probation for the reason that the great business of probation is driven through with prodigiously accelerated rapidity! Oh, how suddenly will your destruction come, unless you speedily repent! Of all places on earth, this should be the last to be chosen to live in, unless you mean to repent. I would as soon go to the very door of hell and pitch my tent to dwell there, as to come here to live, unless I purposed to serve God. Yet many parents bring or send their children here to be educated -- in hope often that they will be converted too; and this is well; so would I; but by all means ply them with truth, and press them with appeals and entreaties, and give them no rest, till they embrace the great salvation. Let these parents see to it that their children are really converted. If they pass along without being converted, do you not expect they will soon break away and plunge into some of the dark mazes of error? Who does not know that this is the natural result of resisting great light? "Because they receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved, God shall send them strong delusion, that they may believe a lie, and all be dammed who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Oh how they go on with rapid strides down to the depths of hell! You scarce can say they are here, before they are gone. And the knell of their early graves proclaims, "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

III. THE LOSS WHEN A SOUL IS LOST.

"For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" -- Mark 8:36, 37.

OURS is an inquisitive world, and the present especially is an inquisitive age. Particularly is this inquisitiveness developed in perpetual inquiries upon matters of loss and gain. Almost universally this class of questions agitates the public mind, often tasking its powers to the utmost. Almost the whole race seem all on fire to know how they can avoid loss and secure gain. Assuredly therefore, this being the great question which men interest themselves to ask, it cannot be out of place for God to propose such a question as the text presents, nor for his servants to take it from his lips and press it upon the attention and the consciences of his hearers.

And let me here say, it must be specially proper to propose it to the young men who are seeking good, and studying questions of profit and gain. Your souls thirst for happiness. How much, then, does it become you to ask whether these questions from the lips of your Redeemer may not give you a priceless clue to the secret of all real and permanent good?

The question concisely expressed is, *What* is *a fair* equivalent for the soul? For what consideration *could a man afford to lose his soul?*

To bring the subject fully before your minds, let me

I. DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION TO THE WORTH OF THE SOUL;

II. TO THE DANGER OF LOSING IT;

III. TO THE CONDITIONS OF SAVING IT.

I. *The worth of the soul*.

Whenever ministers enter the pulpit to preach, they always take many things for granted. All do this more or less; all must do it if they would preach with any effectiveness to the heart; and it is right that they should. This is true not of the gospel minister only, but of every teacher. Every teacher assumes that his pupils exist, and that they know this truth; also, that he exists himself.

Many other truths are assumed by the preacher. We must always begin

somewhere. Generally we begin as the Bible does. The Bible assumes the truths of natural theology, and proceeds in its teachings as if all men knew at least these truths.

This congregation professes to be Christian, and I may therefore assume that at least nominally it is so. I shall not therefore address you as a heathen people, or as atheists, or even Universalists.

There are certain great truths admitted by almost all Christians; for example, *that the soul is immortal*. This is admitted so generally, I shall assume that you all admit it. You admit it to be true of both the righteous and the wicked. You admit that the Bible teaches this, and I shall not therefore attempt to prove it.

It must also be admitted that, from the very nature of mind, its capacities, both of intellect and sensibility, will be always increasing. This increase is obviously a law of mind in this world, although, from the connection of mind with matter, old age and disease seem to form an exception. This is indeed an exception to the common law, yet one which plainly results from the influence of physical frailty, and can therefore have no existence in a state where no physical frailty is experienced. It must be admitted that the exception does not result from any law of mind, but purely from a present law of matter.

The common law of mental progress is exceedingly apparent. Put your eye on the new-born infant. It knows nothing. It begins with the slightest perception, it may be of some visible object, or of the taste of its food. From a starting-point almost imperceptible it goes on, making its hourly accessions of knowledge and consequent expansion of powers, till, like a Newton, it can fathom the sublime problem of the great law of the physical universe.

It is generally admitted that the capacities of men in the future state for either happiness or misery will be full -- absolutely full. That coming state must be in respect to enjoyment, not mixed like the present, but simple; unalloyed bliss, or unalleviated woe. Hence the soul must actually enjoy or suffer to the uttermost limit of its capacity. You all admit this; or if not all, the exceptions are few and I am not aware of any among you.

Let us not forget to connect with this idea of progression the idea of eternity. It is not only progress, *but eternal* progress. This is involved in the immortality of the soul. No doctrine is more plainly taught and more universally implied in the

Bible; none is more amply confirmed by testimony drawn from the nature of the soul itself. It stands among the truths admitted by almost every one who bears even nominally the Christian name.

Now what follows from these admitted truths?

If men are always to progress in knowledge and capacity, then a period will arrive in which the least intelligence will be able to say, I know more now than all the created universe knew when I was born. This must be true. Its truth follows by necessity from the truths we have admitted.

But even this is not all. For when he has reached this point of acquisition in knowledge, he has only begun. Eternity is yet before him. The time will come when he will know ten thousand times as much as all the universe did when he was born; nay, not merely ten thousand times as much, but myriads of myriads of times as much. The time will arrive in the lapse of eternal ages when, if all the present created universe were tasked to the utmost to conceive or estimate how much this one intelligence can know, they would fall entirely short of reaching the mighty conception. And even this is only a mere beginning, for this vast intelligence is not a whit nearer the terminus of his progression than when he was one day old. To be sure, all the universe have kept pace with him. They have all moved along together, under a law of progress common to them all. Each one can say the same and as much as he. The attainments of each and of all will for ever fall short of infinite, although they are always indefinitely increasing.

Look at the happiness of the righteous. Always increasing; ever more swelling its deep and gushing tides, with no limit to their growth and no end to their progression. Who does not know that this must be so? Look at the little infant. It seems to have but the least possible capacity, and this is developed at first only in its physical powers. All the earliest germs of sensation and emotion pertain to the body alone. The little one is hungry and cries; then is nursed and is quiet; it opens its little eye and beholds the light and is pleased; by-and-by it comes to know its mother's presence, and to love that beaming look of fondness and those soothing tones of love. Here opens to that infant mind a new source of happiness, and new powers begin to develop themselves. The little one smiles responsive to the smiles of its now known mother, and enjoys the pleasure of being caressed and loved. Then on and on through opening life: new knowledge opens new sources of happiness; progress -- progress is the established law of our mental and sentient being. By-and-by that child, late an infant, is a pupil in

school, and then a youth in college. On and still onward is his progress in knowledge.

Nor let us lose sight of the fact that the same law of progress obtains also in the department of the sensibility. A uniform relation is maintained between man's intellectual and sentient faculties. Knowledge increasing gives scope for increased joys or sorrows. Thus the mind progresses through all the stages of its earthly existence, new knowledge continually opening new sources of enjoyment or suffering. Mark how much that man or woman is capable of enjoying, compared with the capacity of his or her period of infancy. Now he may be bowed down under an overwhelming weight of sorrow, or he may be lifted up in ecstasies of joy unspeakable and full of glory. And this progress, we should remark, is often made despite of very unfavourable circumstances. The law of progress acts with a positive energy that no ordinary circumstances can resist.

But let us now look into the next world -- the next state of our existence. Knowledge sustains still the same relation to the sensibility; what you know there serves no less than it did here to augment your bliss or aggravate your woe. All the powers of your being sustain the same mutual relation as ever. Just think then how vast the joys and sorrows of that coming state! Mark how they tower high above all that is ever experienced in this brief state! This is no poetry. It is more than poetry -- infinitely more! It is too obviously and certainly true to admit of the least question. Its truth results from admissions you make and doctrines you hold as a Christian congregation -- admissions and doctrines common to all who are not atheists -- common to all who observe the laws of our present existence and who admit that these laws will follow our existence into our future state of being.

Following out these admitted truths to their necessary results, we see that the time must come, in the lapse of eternal ages, when each saint can say, I now enjoy more in a given time than all the saints in the universe did when I first entered heaven. For, as with knowledge, so with happiness: it must of course come under the same law of progress. Its measure must sustain its established correlation to the amount of our knowledge; so that, as the one stretches onward and still onward, with no limit to its progress, so also does the other. As therefore the time will come when no created mind can estimate the knowledge attained by the now feeblest intelligence, so will it also come when no capacity can estimate the measure of its happiness. The Bible says, God is able to do

exceeding abundantly above all we are able to ask or even to think. This will have its striking fulfillment in the future heights of bliss and glory to which he will raise his redeemed people. Oh, who can measure these heights of bliss and glory! Yet when you have fixed your eye upon their towering loftiness at any period along the track of endless ages, you have it to say then and there, This man's happiness is only begun. He has only just entered upon his everlasting progress in knowledge and in bliss. And still, so vast are his capacities at this remote period of his existence, that, if we could look into their amazing length and breadth and depth, and measure their magnitude, we should sink like dead men at the sight. See him drawing draughts of joy from God's own eternal fountains. Will he ever cease to quaff those draughts of joy? Never. Can they ever grow less? Nay; they must of necessity be for ever increasing.

Now see also the progress of the wicked. They, too, are moving onward. The law of progress cannot be arrested by any amount of sinning. Onward still their minds are progressing: more and more capacious for knowledge, and of course for sin and suffering. And Oh! What then? What follows from these established laws of the human mind and of human existence? Let your reflections trace out the fearful results which accrue from these laws of eternal progression. When we get into the midst of these things, the mind becomes exhausted and overpowered; it sinks down and cries out with crushing emotion, Oh! what an eternity is this for the sinner, lost for ever! Oh! look upon that sinner after he has passed along through millions of ages of his unceasing progress in knowledge and in growing capacities for sin and suffering. Hear him. He says, hell knew but little of sin and suffering when I came here compared with what I suffer now! They all then sinned and suffered but little, even taken in the vast aggregate, compared with what I sin and suffer in my own single being now! Alas, I seem to have all hell in my own bosom! I sin and suffer enough with my vastly augmented powers to make an awful hell even if these agonies were equally distributed among myriads of my fellow-beings. How awful! Sin, misery, and ruin enough to make one awful hell, locked up in the agonised bosom of a single sinner!

If this were only poetry I should be glad, but all is true, and so much more is true that no language can express it; no modes of computation and no forms of estimate can reach its appalling magnitude. So much is true that to see the thousandth part of it must set your soul all on fire!

Take any sinner here -- any young man or woman from this congregation. Follow him onward from this hour through a life of sinning, a death of darkness and horror, and then onward still as he rolls in the agonies of the second death, and moves onward, age after age in the unceasing progress of a human mind expanding its intelligence, learning more and more of the God the sinner hates, and only hating Him for ever the more, and only making himself the more immeasurably wretched by sinning with more bitter hate, and suffering with still enlarged capacities as the eternal years roll on! O young man! you will one day be able to say, All that hell knew of suffering before I came here is nothing compared with what I now suffer. All is nothing to the aggregate of my sins and of my sufferings. And all I now endure is only a beginning. My miseries have only begun. This soul of mine has only begun to know how to suffer the real sufferings of the damned. Its keen sensitiveness to agony has only begun to develop itself. Yet at some period in the flow of those endless years of progression in sorrow, each one will say, If all the universe at the moment of my death had taxed their minds to the utmost to conceive the guilt and miseries that wring my heart, they could not even have begun to reach the appalling estimate!

Would to God this were only poetry! Alas, that it should be among the best established truths in the universe of realities! Young man, there is no axiom in mathematics more true than this. No problem you ever solved in algebra brought out its result with more certainty; no proposition of Euclid ever carried you more unerringly to its conclusions, than our reasoning upon these known and changeless laws of mind in their progression onward through the endless cycles of eternity. Go onward and still onward; you must yet say, after ever so many periods of largest conception, I have only just begun. I am only entering the vestibule of this world of woe -- only counting off the first moments, as it were, of the eternal cycles of my existence!

To pursue this train of thought in its details seems utterly impossible! How the mind sinks beneath the overpowering view! Oh, the worth of the soul, progressing for ever under a law as fixed as, and as enduring as, Jehovah's throne! The worth of a soul that must make progress in knowledge, and consequently in its capacities for bliss and for holiness, or for sin and for woe -- who can estimate it to the last fraction! Tell me, ye young men of mathematical genius, ye professors in this science of certainties -- ye who think ye have some knowledge of fixed truths and some skill in deducing them from first principles; tell me, are these things poetry? You know they are eternal truth; you know they

are verities, than which none in the universe can be more sure. "What, then, shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

II. *But what must be said of the danger of losing the soul!*

This danger is exceedingly great, because men have only to neglect the soul and it is surely lost. It does not require attention and labour. You can lose your soul without the least possible effort made specially for this purpose. You need not go about to commit sin in order to insure the ruin of your soul hopelessly and for ever. You need only neglect its salvation and it is surely lost. You need only be as negligent as you have been heretofore. It is only necessary that you slide along in the same thoughtless, reckless manner as in your past days, and the end will be "sudden destruction, and that without remedy." As says the Apostle: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby ye can be saved. And there is no salvation through this name but by a living faith which works by love and makes the heart pure from sin.

Men will lose their souls *if they mistake the conditions of salvation*. For these conditions require intelligent effort, and to misunderstand them makes it certain that your efforts will not be made intelligently, even if any sort of effort is made at all. There is, therefore, most imminent danger in this quarter.

Again, there is the more danger because men are so little inclined to inform themselves respecting those truths which relate to the conditions of salvation. It is a most astounding fact that, in matters so deeply interesting to every one who is to be saved or lost, no man should incline to search after the requisite knowledge of the way to be saved.

There is also the more danger because men are surrounded with temptations to neglect the soul's salvation.

It is the policy of Satan to surround men with as many temptations as possible to neglect this great subject. He gives them everything else to do; sets their wits at work to kill time and devise amusing and diverting occupations, and stave off all serious thought into some unknown future. Nothing delights or employs him more than to draw the sinner in and hold him fast in the snare of his infernal devices.

Again, there is the more ground to fear because you are in so much danger of

practising deception upon yourself, especially this deception, that you can better attend to the saving of your soul at some other time. This is Satan's masterpiece of deception. It has fixed the doom of damnation upon myriads of souls.

If I had time to enter upon these various dangers and expand them at length in view of the awfulness of losing the soul, how startling would be the fearful facts of the case! If all these countless dangers were seen in their real magnitude, and especially if they were seen in their bearings upon the loss of a soul, methinks it would rouse all mankind into excitement almost to madness in securing the salvation of their souls. How could they refrain from crying out in the very streets, and within the very walls of their bedchambers, What shall I do to be saved from such a hell? The danger is real, although due sensibility to it is so rare. We have it from the lips of one that knew, "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat." And no fact is more open to observation than this. Everybody sees it; all may know it.

III. *What are the conditions of saving the soul?*

Here let it be well considered that the conditions are none of them arbitrary. All are naturally necessary. Each one is revealed as a condition, because, in the nature of the case, it is and must be. God requires it as a condition because he cannot save the soul without it. For example, you must be sanctified and become holy in heart and life. Why? Not because God sees fit arbitrarily to impose such a condition, but because it is impossible you should be happy without it; because it is impossible you should enjoy heaven, and therefore inadmissible that you should enter heaven, without holiness.

So, also, you must be sanctified by faith in Christ, and saved in all respects -- by this faith, for the simple reason that no other agency can sanctify and save. There is none other name given among men whereby ye can be saved. No other Redeemer exists to be believed in; no other power but that of faith in such a Redeemer ever yet reached the heart to subdue it to submission, penitence, and love.

REMARKS.

1. There is nothing more wonderful and strange than the tendency of the human mind to neglect reflection and serious thought upon the value of the soul. The entire orthodox world admit the truths upon which we started, and admit

substantially those other truths which are necessarily connected with them. Now it is most astounding that these truths should be dropped out of mind -- their bearings forgotten, and all their relations be overlooked as if they had no value, as if they were indeed only fictions and not facts. They are forgotten by parents, so that few indeed think of the bearings of these truths upon their children's well-being for eternity; they are forgotten by husbands and by wives, so that in these relations of life little is said, little felt, little done, for each other's salvation. In fact, these great truths have come to be less regarded than almost any one of the ten thousand things of this world. The least of these worldly matters is practically treated as of more value than the soul. Must there not be a strange delirium upon the human mind?

2. Nothing is so important to the Christian church and to the world as that the church should direct her attention to these great things till they arouse her whole soul! till they awaken from spiritual lethargy every member of Christ's nominal church on earth. The Primitive Christians of apostolic times pondered these truths until their hearts were on fire, and they could not wish to do less than to lay themselves out for the salvation of the world. The same engrossing and soul-stirring attention to these great truths is needed to awaken the churches of the present day.

3. As these great truths of the soul are neglected, worldly things magnify themselves in apparent importance. If men do not dwell upon eternity, time comes to be their only reality. If they do not dwell upon the great spiritual truths that relate to the eternal world, to heaven and to hell; if they do not pour their minds out upon these truths, the trifles of time will assume the chief importance. Men will become worldly-minded.

Their minds become contracted, in the scope of their views, to the narrow circle of their earthly relations, and they come to live as if there were no God, no heaven, no hell.

4. You may see the nature of worldly-mindedness. It is real *insanity*. Suppose a man to act as if he had no relations to this world. Suppose he should act as if he had no more to do with it than most men seem to have with the other world beyond this. Let him act as if he had no bodily wants -- no occasion for food or for clothing. Of course he would be regarded as a madman; his friends, or, if not they, the civil authorities, would hasten to put him in a madhouse. They would sue out a commission of lunacy against him, to save his property, if he had any,

for the benefit of himself and his family. For precisely this is real insanity -- overlooking real facts and acting as if they did not exist.

But what shall we say of those who treat these truths of eternity as if they were not truths? Is not this also real insanity? The man *knows* the great facts respecting the future world. He has a book well authenticated, containing all the facts, fully revealed; he holds all the important facts with the utmost tenacity, and would deem himself slandered as a heretic if you were to intimate a doubt of the soundness of his faith; in fact, his orthodoxy is his pride and his glory; *but yet he lives as if he did not believe a word of it*. Surely this man is practically insane. You cannot but regard such a case with horror. Oh! you say, if he had never known these things, he would not have incurred the guilt of this dreadful insanity; but, alas! he does know them all. He has them all written down; all are embraced in the standards of his faith, and he would not be supposed to doubt one word of these standards for the value of his best reputation. Then is he not insane? Alas, the world is a complete bedlam! See their manuals of doctrines; read carefully their standards, and see what they believe; then see how they live-as if there were no heaven and no hell; no atonement, no Saviour; nothing but this world and its good things! And are they not madmen? Does the Bible slander them at all when it declares, "*Madness* is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead?"

5. How must the people of other worlds look upon the men of this! Particularly, I ask, how must they regard those who live in those portions of our world where light blazes and every eye must see it? How are they astonished in heaven to see such exhibitions of depravity on earth! How must they look on with unutterable amazement as they mark the clear and blazing light which God pours upon the realities of the eternal world, and then observe how little this light is regarded even by those who see it most and best!

6. How many are struggling to secure any thing and every thing else but the salvation of the soul! And yet they know that every thing else gained is worse than loss if the soul is lost. What egregious folly! And, what is more, think of the appalling guilt! and of the coming account to be rendered for both the guilt and the folly! God will call you all to account -- you for the property you sought to the neglect of your soul, and chose at the cost of ruining your soul; and *you* for the education which you valued more than the salvation of your soul. What, young man, do you propose to do with that education which you have put before

your soul and sought to the neglect and ruin of your eternal being? You may enter the eternal world an educated young man -- with all your powers developed and matured, so that you can take your position in that world of woe in an advanced class: as some young men come here prepared to enter in advance -- as far perhaps as the junior year, so you, by virtue of your education, may enter among the more advanced minds in hell, ripe for drinking deeper draughts of remorse, your intellect enlarged for broader views of your relations, and sharpened for keener impressions of your fearful guilt! Oh what must it be to take your starting-point in that world of agonising thought, in advance of your age and your time, ready to start off with more rapid strides in the dread career of progression in the knowledge -- in the sinning -- and in the consequent woes of the damned! Take such a mind as Byron's. How much more is he capable of suffering in one hour on his death-bed than a mind of only ordinary capacity! Sit down by his death-bed. Mark his rolling eye -- his look of agony -- the reach and grasp of his capacious soul! See how keenly he feels every sensation of remorse -- how large his scope of view as he thinks of his relations to the God he should have loved but did not, and to the world he should have blessed by his talents but only cursed by his depravity! You may have often said, if I were only as great and as talented as Byron; if I only had his power as a poet -- his genius -- his talent -- how glorious! I could ask nothing more.

You would then be as great as Byron! But what then? Suppose you were; what would you gain? What would it profit you to gain all he ever gained of mental power, or earthly fame, and to lose your soul? Oh think of this: to be a Byron and to lose your soul! Would this be gain? Could you afford to devote your being to such an object, and having gained it, die and go to hell?

Or suppose you aspire to be a statesman. You climb the slow assent of office; you rise in the confidence of your party, till step by step you ascend the tall acclivity, and see the summit of ambition only a little way before you: then down you go to hell! How much have you gained, even if you have reached the glittering summit, and then lose your soul?

7. In the eternal world there will be an entire reversal of position; the highest here are lowest there, and the lowest here are the most favoured or certainly the least accursed there. The kings of the earth, highest on their thrones, will have the largest account to settle there, the heaviest responsibilities to bear, and of course the most fearful doom. Here he sits in grand and lofty state; the subject

must kneel before him to present even a petition; but death reverses the scene. Let this king on his throne but die in his sins: he tumbles from his rotten throne to the depths of hell! Where does he go? What is his position among the ranks of the lost? Down, deep in the lowest depths of perdition. Here his princely steeds and outriding footmen give him the *éclat of* nobility; but if he abused his dignity to the feeding of earthly pride and to the crushing of the poor, he sinks deep below those once so far beneath him. Now they mark his fall like Lucifer, son of morning. Now perhaps they hiss at him, and curse him, saying, How art thou fallen from the throne of thy glory! And thou art here, down deep in the infamy of hell! Thou wretch! How they hiss at all his plagues! The very fires of hell roar and hiss at him as he sinks beneath their wild engulfing billows. So the great ones of any country who sell their souls for ambition and earthly power: what have they gained? An office -- it may be, a crown; but they have lost a soul! Alas! where are they now? The most miserably guilty and wretched among all the wretched ones of hell! Hear what they say as they go down waiting along the sides of the pit! "So much for the folly of selling my soul for a bubble of vanity! For an hour I sought and chose to be exalted; how fearfully do I sink now, and sink for ever! Oh the contrast of earth and hell!" Hark! what do they say? The man clothed in purple and fine linen lifts up his eyes in hell, being in torments; he sees Abraham afar off, and Lazarus, that old ulcerated beggar, is now in his bosom; and what does he say? He cries aloud, "Father Abraham, I pray thee send Lazarus to me; let him dip only the tip of his finger in water and put it on my tongue; I can do without my golden cup; that's gone for ever now; but let Lazarus come with his finger dipped in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

But what is the answer to this agonising prayer? Son, thou hast had thy good things, all of them, to the last dregs; and Lazarus all his evil things; now he is comforted and thou art tormented.

Let this illustrate what I mean in speaking of the wide but righteous *contrast* between the state of souls in time and in eternity; the strange reversal of condition, by which the lowest here become highest there, and the highest here become the lowest there.

8. Men really intend to secure both this world and salvation. They never suppose it wise to lose their own soul. Nor do they think to gain anything by running the risk of losing it. Indeed, they do not mean to run any great risks -- only a little,

the least they can conveniently make it, and yet gain a large measure of earthly good. But in attempting to get the world, they lose their souls. God told them they would, but they did not believe him. Rushing on the fearful venture and assuming to be wiser than God, they grasped the world to get it first, thinking to get heaven afterwards; thus they tempted the Spirit; provoked God to forsake them; lost their day of salvation and lost all the world besides. How infinitely just and right is their reward! Why did they not believe God? Every one of them knew that being saved through Christ, he would be infinitely rich, and being lost, he would make himself infinitely poor; and yet he rushed upon the fatal venture, and went down, despite of grace, to an eternal hell!

9. What is really worth living for but to save souls? You may think it is worth living for to be a judge or a senator -- but *is it?* Is it, if the price must be the loss of your soul? How many of our American Presidents have died as you would wish to die? If you should live to gain the object of your ambition, what would be your chance of saving your soul? The world being what it is, and the temptations incident to office and worldly honours being as they are, how great would be your prospects of saving your souls? Would it be wise of you to run the hazard?

What else would you live for than to save souls? Would you not rather save souls than be President of this Union? "He that winneth souls is wise." "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever." Will this be the case with the ungodly Presidents who die in their sins?

What do you propose to do, young man, or young woman, with your education? Have you any higher or nobler object to live for than to save souls? Have you any more worthy object upon which to expend the resources of a cultivated mind and the accumulated powers gained by education? Think -- what should I live for but the gems of heaven -- for what but the honour of Jesus, my Master?

They who do not practically make the salvation of souls -- their own and others, their chief concern, deserve not the name of rational; they are not sane. Look at their course of practical life as compared with their knowledge of facts. Are they sane, or are they deranged?

It is time for the church to consecrate her mind and her whole heart to this subject. It is indeed time that she should lay these great truths in all their burning power close to her heart. Alas, how is her soul palsied with the spirit of the

world! Nothing can save her and restore her to spiritual life until she brings her mind and heart into burning contact with these living, energising truths of eternity. The church of our times needs the apostolic spirit. She needs so deep a baptism with those fires of the Holy Ghost that she can go out and set the world on fire by her zeal for the souls of men. Till then the generation of our race must go on, thronging the broad way to hell because no man cares for their souls.

IV. GOD'S ANGER AGAINST THE WICKED.

"God is angry with the wicked every day." -- Psalms 7:11.

In speaking from this text I design to show briefly:

I. WHO ARE "WICKED" IN THE SCRIPTURE SENSE OF THIS TERM;

II. THAT GOD IS ANGRY WITH THEM;

III. THE NATURE OF THIS ANGER;

IV. THE REASONS FOR IT;

V. ITS DEGREE;

VI. ITS DURATION;

VII. THE TERRIBLE CONDITION OF SINNERS UNDER IT.

I. *The Bible divides all the human race into two classes only, the righteous and the wicked*.

Those are righteous who have true faith in Christ, whose spirit is consecrated to God, who live a heavenly life on earth, and who have been renewed by the Holy Ghost. Their original selfishness is subdued and slain and they live a new life through the ever-present grace of Christ Jesus.

Right over against them in character are the wicked, who have not been renewed in heart; who live in selfishness, under the dominion of appetite in some of its forms, and it matters not in which, out of all possible forms, it may be, but self is the great and only ultimate end of their life. These are, in the scriptural sense, the wicked.

II. *God is angry with the wicked.*

Our text explicitly affirms this. The same truth is affirmed and implied in numerous other passages. Let the sinner remember that this is the testimony of God himself. Who should better know the feelings of God towards sinners than God himself does? Who on this point can gainsay what God affirms?

But this truth is also taught by reason. Every man in the exercise of his reason

knows it ought to be true. If God were not opposed to the wicked, he would be wicked himself for not opposing them. What would you think of a judge who did not hate and oppose lawbreakers? Would you think him an honest man if he did not take sides against transgressors? Everybody knows that this is the dictate of reason and of common sense. Sinners know this, and always assume it in their practical judgments. They know that God is angry with them, and ought to be -- though they may not realise it. Sinners know many things which they do not realise. For instance, you who are in sin know that you must die; but you have more reason to be assured that God is angry with you than you have to be sure that you must die; for it is not necessarily so certain that you will die as it is that God is angry with you for your sin. God may possibly translate you from this world to another without your death, as he has some others; but there never was, and never can be, any exception to the universal law of his anger against all the wicked. You know this, therefore, with an absolute certainty, which precludes all possibility of rational doubt.

Sinners do know this, as I have said, and always assume it in their practical judgments. Else why are they afraid to die? Why afraid to meet God face to face in the world of retribution? Would they have this fear if they did not know that God is angry with them for their sin? It would be gratuitous, therefore, to prove this truth to the sinner. He already knows it -- knows it not only as a thing that is, but as what ought to be.

III. *The nature of God's anger*.

The nature of this anger demands our attention. On this point it is important to notice negatively:

1. It is not a malicious anger. God is never malicious; never has a disposition to do any wrong in any way to any being. He is infinitely far from such feelings, and from any such developments of anger.

2. His anger is not passion in the sense in which men are wont to exhibit passion in anger. You may often have seen men whose sensibility is lashed into fury under an excitement of anger; their very souls seem to be boiling with fermentation, so intense is their excitement. Reason for the time is displaced, and passion reigns. Now God is never angry in such a way. His anger against the wicked involves no such excitement of passion.

3. God's anger cannot be in any sense a selfish anger; for God is not selfish in the least degree, but infinitely the reverse of it. Of course his anger against the wicked must be entirely devoid of selfishness.

But positively his anger against the wicked implies:

1. An entire disapprobation of their conduct and character. He disapproves most intensely and utterly everything in either their heart or their life. He loathes the wicked with infinite loathing.

2. He feels the strongest opposition of will to their character. It is so utterly opposed to his own character and to his own views of right that his will arrays itself in the strongest form of opposition against it.

3. God's anger involves also strong opposition of feeling against sinners. Undoubtedly God must have feelings of anger against the wicked. We cannot suppose it possible that God should behold sin without feelings of anger.

In our attempts to conceive of the mental faculties of the divine mind, we are under a sort of necessity of reasoning analogically from our own minds. Revelation has told us that we are "made in the image of God." Of course the mind of God is the antitype from which ours was cast. The great constituent elements of mind, we must suppose, are therefore alike in both the infinite and the finite. As we have intellect, sensibility, and will, so has God.

From our own minds, moreover, we infer not only what the faculties of the divine mind are, but also the laws under which they act. We know that in the presence of certain objects we naturally feel strong opposition. Those objects are so related to our sensibility that anger and indignation are the natural result. We could not act according to the fixed laws of our own minds if we did not utterly disapprove wrong-doing, and if our disapproval of it, moreover, did not awaken some real *sensibility* in the form of displeasure and indignation against the wrong-doer.

Some suppose that these results of the excited sensibility against wrong would not develop themselves if our hearts were right. This is a great mistake. The nearer right our hearts are, the more certainly shall we disapprove wrong, the more intensely shall we feel opposed to it, and the greater will be our displeasure against the wrong-doer. Hence we must not only suppose that God is angry in the sense of a will opposed to sin, but in the further sense of a sensibility

enkindled against it. This must be the case if God is truly a moral agent.

4. God is not angry merely against the sin abstracted from the sinner, but against the sinner himself. Some persons have laboured hard to set up this ridiculous and absurd abstraction, and would fain make it appear that God is angry at the sin, yet not at the sinner. He hates the theft, but loves the thief. He abhors adultery, but is pleased with the adulterer. Now this is supreme nonsense. The sin has no moral character apart from the sinner. The act is nothing apart from the actor. The very thing that God hates and disapproves is not the mere event -- the thing done in distinction from the doer; but it is the *doer himself*. It grieves and displeases Him that a rational moral agent, under his government, should array himself against his own God and Father, against all that is right and just in the universe. This is the thing that offends God. The sinner himself is the direct and the only object of his anger.

So the Bible shows. God is angry with the wicked, not with the abstract sin. If the wicked turn not, God will whet his sword, he hath bent his bow and made it ready, not to shoot the *sin*, however, but the *sinner* -- the wicked man who has done the abominable thing. This is the only doctrine of either the Bible or of common sense on this subject.

5. The anger of God against the wicked implies all that properly belongs to anger when it exists *with good reason*. We know by our own experience that when we are angry with good reason, we have strong opposition of will, and also strong feelings of displeasure and disapprobation, against wrong-doers. Hence we may infer that under the same circumstances the same is true of God.

IV. *The reasons of God's anger against the wicked.*

His anger is never excited without good reasons. Causeless anger is always sinful. "Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the judgment." God never himself violates his own laws -- founded as they are in infinite right and justice. Hence God's anger always has good reasons.

Good reasons exist for his anger, and he is angry for those reasons. It is not uncommon for persons to be angry, under circumstances, too, which are good reasons for anger, but still they are not angry for those good reasons, but for other reasons which are not good. For example, every sinner has good reasons for being angry with every other sinner for his wickedness against God. But

sinners are not angry against other sinners for those reasons. Although these reasons actually exist, yet when angry at sinners, it is not for these good reasons, but for some selfish reasons, which are not good. This is a common case. You see persons angry, and if you reprove them for their anger as sinful, they seek to justify themselves by affirming that they are angry with the man for his sins -- for his wrong-doing against God. Now this is indeed a good and sufficient reason for anger, and the justification would be a good one if the anger were really excited by this cause. But often, although this reason exists, and is pleaded by the man as his excuse for anger, yet it is no excuse, for, in fact, he is not angry for this cause, but has some selfish reason for his anger. Not so with God. God is angry with the wicked, not irrespective of his sins, but for his sins.

1. Wicked men are entirely unreasonable. Their conduct is at war with all reason and with all right. God has given them intelligence and conscience; but they act in opposition to both. God has given them a pure and good law, yet this they recklessly violate. Hence their conduct is in every point of view utterly unreasonable.

Now we all know that, by a fixed law of our being, nothing can be a greater temptation to anger than to see persons act unreasonably. This is one of the greatest trials that can occur, and one of the strongest incentives to anger. So when God looks at the unreasonable conduct of sinners, he feels the strongest indignation and displeasure. If they were not rational beings endowed with reason, no anger would be awakened and called forth. But since God knows them to be endowed with reason, and to be capable of true and noble-hearted obedience, he cannot fail of being displeased with their transgression.

2. The course of the wicked is utterly ruinous. No thanks to the sinner if his influence does not ruin the whole world. By the very laws of mind, the sin of any one man tends to influence other men to sin, and they spread far and wide the dreadful contagion of his example. It may truly be said that the sinner does the worst thing possible to him to ruin the universe. He sets the example of rebellion against the supreme government of all worlds. And what influence can be more potent than that of example? What worse thing, therefore, can the sinner do to destroy all good than he is doing by his sin? No thanks to him if every man who sees his sin does not imitate it to his own ruin, and throw the power of his own example broadcast over all his associates. No thanks to any sinner if his own influence for ruin does not run like fire on the prairies, over all the world, and

then over every other world of moral beings in the universe of God.

Think of the father of a family, living in his sins and exerting his great influence over his household to make them all as wicked as himself. Who can estimate the power of his influence over his wife and his children? Does he pray with them and seek to lead them to God? No; his example is prayerless. It proclaims every day to his family, "You have no occasion at all to pray. You see I can live without prayer." Does he read the Bible to them or with them? No; his constant example before them sets the Bible at naught, And continually suggests that they will be as well off without reading the Bible as with. His whole influence, therefore, is ruinous to the souls of his family. No thanks to him, if they do not all go down to hell along with himself. If they do not scream around him with yells of mingled imprecation and despair, cursing him as the guilty author of their ruin, he will have other agencies to thank besides his own. Surely he has done what he well could do to secure results so dreadful as these. Has not God good reason to be angry with him? Why not? Would not you feel that you have good reasons to be angry with a man who should come into your family to destroy its peace -- to seduce your wife and daughters, and to entice your sons into some pathway of crime and ruin? Certainly you would. Now do not all families belong to God in a far higher sense than any man's family belongs to him? Why, then, has not God as good reasons for anger against a wicked father as you could have against a villain who should plot and seek to effect the mischief and ruin of your family? Is it wonderful to you that God should be angry with every wicked father? Just consider what that father is doing by his bare example -- even supposing that his words are well-guarded and not particularly liable to objection. Who does not know that example is the very highest and strongest moral power? It does not need the help of teaching to make its power felt for terrible mischief. The prayerless husband and father! The devil could not do worse -- nay, more, not so bad; for the devil never had mercy offered him, never stood related as this wicked father does, to offered pardon and to the glorious gospel. If, then, God would have good reason to be angry at the devil, much more has he for anger against this wicked father.

The same substantially is true of other classes of sinners. It is essential to their very course as sinners, that they are in rebellion against God, and are doing the very worst thing in the universe by drawing other moral beings into sin.

3. Again, God is so good and sinners are so wicked, he cannot help being angry

at them. If he were not angry at the wicked, he would be as much worse than they as he is wiser than they. Since, in his wisdom and knowledge, he knows more fully than they do the great evil of sin, by so much the more is he under obligation to be displeased with sin and angry at the sinner. We sometimes hear men say, "God is too good to be angry at sinners." What do men mean by this language? Do they mean that God is too good to be opposed to all evil? too good to be displeased with all evil-doers? This were indeed a strange goodness! God too good to hate sin -- too good to oppose sinners! What sort of goodness can this be?

I have sometimes heard men say that if God should be angry with sinners, he would be as bad as the devil himself. Now this is not only horrible language on the score of its blasphemy, but it is monstrous absurdity on the score of its logic. The amount of its logic is that God would be himself wicked if he should be displeased at wickedness. So wrong it must be to hate the wrong-doer! Pray, who is it that holds such doctrine? Is it not possible that they feel some interest in sustaining wrong-doers even against God himself?

Really there is no force, no plausibility even, in this language about the wrong of God's being angry at sinners, except what arises from misconceiving and misrepresenting the true idea of the divine anger in this case. If God's anger were in itself sinful -- as is the case often with man's anger -- then, of course, nothing more can be said in its vindication. But since his anger is never sinful, never selfish, never malicious, never unholy or wrong in any degree whatever, nothing can be more false, nothing more sophistical, nothing more ungenerous and vile and Satanic, than to imply that it is. But this is just what men do when they say that for God to be angry at sinners is to be himself wicked.

The true view of this case is not by any means abstruse or difficult of apprehension. Who does not know that good men are, by virtue of their goodness, opposed to wicked men? Surely all wicked men know this well enough. Else why the fear they have of good and law-abiding men? Why do all horse-thieves and counterfeiters keep dark from good men, dread their presence, commonly feel a strong dislike to them, and always dread their influence as hostile to their own wicked schemes?

So wicked men feel towards God. They know that his goodness places him in hostile array against themselves. This fact seems to be implied in the Psalmist's expostulation, "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The

goodness of God endureth continually." God is always good; how can you be proud of your wickedness? God is too good and too constantly good to afford you any scope for sin, any ground of hope for peace with him in your iniquity.

V. *The degree of God's anger against sin*.

It is plain that the degree of God's anger against the wicked ought to be equal to the degree of their wickedness, and must be if God is what he should be. The times of heathen ignorance and darkness "God winked at;" the degree of their guilt being less, by as much as their light is less, than that of such cities as Chorazin and Bethsaida. God does not hold them innocent *absolutely*; but relatively they might almost be called innocent, compared with the great guilt of sinners in gospel lands. Against those who sin amidst the clearest light, his anger must burn most intensely; for example, against sinners in this place and congregation. You may be outwardly a decent and moral main, respected and beloved by your friends; but if you are a selfish, impenitent sinner, the pure and holy God loathes and abhors you. He sees more real guilt in you than in ten thousand of those dark-minded heathen who are bowing down to idol gods, and whose crimes you read of with loathing and disgust. Think of it. God may be more angry against you for your great wickedness than against a nation of idolators whose ignorance he winks at, while he measures your light and consequent guilt in the balances of his own eternal justice. Oh! are you living here amid the blazing sunlight of truth; knowing your duty every day and every day refusing to do it; do you not know that in the eye of God you are one of the wickedest beings out of hell, or in hell, either, and that God's hatred against your sin is equal to your great guilt? But you say perhaps, Am I not moral and honest? Suppose you are moral. *For whose sake* are you moral, and for what reason? Is it not for your reputation's sake only? The devil might be as moral for such a purpose as you are. Mark, it is not for God's sake, not for Christ's sake, that you are a moral man, but because you love yourself. You might be just as moral if there were no God, or if you were an atheist. Of course if so, you are saying in your heart, Let there be no fear of God before my eyes, no love of God in my heart. Let me live, and have my own way, as if there were no God. And all this you do, not under the darkness of heathenism, but amid the broadest sunlight of heaven's truth blazing all around you. Do you still ask, What have I done? You have arrayed yourself against God, rejected the gospel of his Son, and done despite to the Spirit of his grace. What heathen has ever done this, or anything that could compare with this in guilt? The vilest heathen people that ever

wallowed in the filth of their own abominations are pure compared with you. Do you start back and rebel against this view of your case? Then let us ask again, by what rule are we to estimate guilt? You pass along the street and you see the lower animals doing what you would be horrified to see human beings do, but you never think of them as *guilty*. You see those dogs try to tear each other to pieces; you will perhaps try to part them; but you will not think of feeling moral indignation or moral displeasure against them; and why? Because you instinctively judge of their guilt by their light, and by their capacity for governing themselves by light and reason. On nearly the same principle you might see the heathen reeking in their abominations, quarrelling, and practising the most loathsome forms of vice and selfishness; but their guilt is only a glimmering taper compared with yours, and therefore you cannot but estimate their guilt as by so much less than your own as their light is less! Your reason demands that you should estimate guilt on this principle, and you know that you cannot rightly estimate it on any other. For the very same reason you must conclude that God estimates guilt on the same principles, and that his anger against sin is in proportion to the sinner's guilt, estimated in view of the light he enjoys and sins against. The degree of God's anger against the wicked is not measured by their outward conduct, but by their real guilt as seen by him whose eye is on the heart.

VI. *The duration of God's anger against the wicked*.

It manifestly must continue as long as the wickedness itself continues. As long as wicked men continue wicked, so long must God be angry at them every day. If they turn not, there can be no abatement, no cessation, of his anger. This is so plain that everybody must know it.

VII. *The terrible condition of the sinner against whom God is angry*.

This dreadful truth that God is angry with the wicked every day, sinners know, but do not realize. Yet it were well for you who are sinners to apprehend and estimate this just as it is.

Look then at the attributes of God. Who and what is God? Is he not a Being whose wrath against you is to be dreaded? You often feel that it is a terrible thing to incur the displeasure of some men. Children are often exceedingly afraid of the anger of their parents. Any child has reason to feel that it is a terrible state of things, when he has done wrong and knows it must come to the knowledge of his

father and his mother, and must arouse their keenest displeasure against himself -- this is terrible, and no wonder a child should dread it. How much more has the sinner reason to fear and tremble when by his sin he has made the Almighty God his enemy! Think of his state! Think of the case of the sinner's exposing himself to the indignation of the great and dreadful God! Look at God's natural attributes. Who can measure the extent of his power? Who or what can resist his will? He taketh up the isles as a very little thing, and the nations before him are only as the small dust of the balance. When his wrath is kindled, who can stand before it, or stay its dreadful fury?

Think also of his omniscience. He knows all you have done. Every act has passed underneath his eye; and not every external act, merely, but, what is far more dreadful to you, every motive lying back of every act -- all the most hidden workings of your heart. Oh, if you were only dealing with some one whom you could deceive, how would you set yourself at work to plan some deep scheme of deception! But all in vain here, for God knows it all. If it were a case between yourself and some human tribunal, you might cover up many things; you might perjure yourself; or might smuggle away the dreaded witnesses; but before God, no such measures can avail you for one moment. The whole truth will come out, dread its disclosure as much as you may. The darkness and the light are both alike to him, and nothing can be hidden from his eye.

Again, not only does God know everything you have done, and not only is he abundantly able to punish you, but he is as much disposed as he is able, or omniscient. You will find he has no disposition to overlook your guilt. He is so good that he never can let sin unrepented of pass unnoticed and unpunished. It would be an infinite wrong to the universe if he should! If he were to do it, he would at once cease to be a good and holy God!

O sinner! do you ever think of God's perfect holiness -- the infinite purity of his heart? Do you ever think how intensely strong must be his opposition to your sin? to those sins of yours, which are so bad even in your own view that you cannot bear to have many of your fellowmen know them? How do you suppose your guilty soul appears in the eye of the pure and holy God?

You often hear of God's mercy. You hope for some good to yourself, perhaps, from this attribute of his nature. Ah! if you had not spurned it, and trampled it under your feet; if you had not slighted and abused its manifestations to you, it might befriend you in your day of need. But ah, how can you meet insulted

mercy! What can you say for yourself in defence for having sinned against the richest mercy the world ever saw? Can you hope that God's injured mercy will befriend you? Nay, verily; God has not one attribute which is not armed against you. Such is his nature, and such his character, that you have nothing to hope, but everything to fear. His dreadful anger against you must be expressed. He may withhold its expression for a season, to give the utmost scope for efforts to reclaim and save you. But when these efforts shall have failed, then will not justice take her course? Will not insulted Majesty utter her awful voice? Will not the infinite God arise in his awful purity, and proclaim, "I hate all wickedness, my anger burns against the sinner to the lowest hell?" Will not Jehovah take measures to make his true position towards sinners known?

REMARKS.

1. God is much more opposed to sinners than Satan is. Doubtless this must be so, for Satan has no special reason for being opposed to sinners. They are doing his work very much as he would have them. We have no evidence that Satan is displeased with their course. But God is displeased with them, and for the best of reasons.

Men sometimes say, If God is angry with the wicked, he is worse than Satan. They seem to think that Satan is a liberal, generous-hearted being. They are rather disposed to commend him as, on the whole, very charitable and noble-hearted. They may think that Satan is bad enough, but they cannot be reconciled to it that God should be so hard on sinners.

Now the facts are that God is too good to be otherwise than angry with sinners. The devil is so bad himself that he finds no difficulty in being well enough pleased with their vileness: it does not offend him. Hence, from his very nature, God must hate the sinner infinitely more than Satan does.

2. If God were not angry with sinners, he would not be worthy of confidence. What would you think of a civil governor who should manifest no indignation against transgressors of the law? You would say, of course, that he had not the good of the community at heart, and you could have no confidence in him.

3. God's anger with sinners is not inconsistent with his happiness. Why should it be, if it is not inconsistent with his holiness? If there were anything wrong about it, then it would indeed destroy all his happiness; but if it be intrinsically right,

then it not only cannot destroy his happiness, but he could not be happy without anger against the wicked. His happiness must be conditioned upon his acting and feeling in accordance with the reality of things. Hence, if God did not hate sin and did not manifest his hatred in all proper ways, he could not respect himself; he could not retire within the great deep of his own nature, and enjoy eternal bliss in the consciousness of infinite rectitude.

4. God's opposition to sinners is his glory. It is all-glorious to God to manifest his anger towards wicked men and devils. Is not this the fact with all good rulers? Do they not seize every opportunity to manifest their opposition to the wicked, and is not this their real glory? Do we not account it their glory to be zealous and efficient in detecting crime? Most certainly. They can have no other real glory. But suppose a ruler should sympathise with murderers, thieves, robbers. We should execrate his very name!

5. Saints love God for his opposition to sinners, not excepting even his opposition to their *own sins*. They could not have confidence in him if he did not oppose their own sins, and it is not in their hearts to ask him to favour even their own iniquities. No; where they come near him and see how he is opposed to their own sins, and to them on account of them, they honour him and adore him the more. They do not want any being in the universe to connive at their own sins, or to take any other stand toward themselves as sinners, than that of opposition.

6. This text is to be understood as it reads. Its language is to be taken in its obvious sense. Some have supposed that God is not really angry with sinners, but uses this language in accommodation to our understandings.

This is an unwarrantable latitude of interpretation. Suppose we should apply the same principle to what is said of God's love. When we read, "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son," suppose we say, this cannot mean real love, such as we feel for each other -- no, nothing like this; the language is only used by way of accommodation, and really has no particular sense whatever. This sort of interpretation would destroy the Bible, or any other book ever written. The only sound view of this matter is that God speaks as sensible men do -- to be understood by the reader and hearer, and of course uses language in its most obvious sense. If he says he is angry against the wicked, we must suppose that he really is.

It is indeed true that we are to qualify the language, as I have already shown, by what we absolutely know of his real character, and therefore hence infer that this language cannot imply malicious anger, or selfish anger, or any forms of anger inconsistent with infinite benevolence. But having made the necessary qualifications, there are no more to be made, and the cardinal idea of anger still remains -- *a fixed eternal displeasure and opposition against all sinners because of their great guilt.*

7. God's anger against the sinner does not exclude love -- real, compassionate love; not, however, the love of complacency, but the love of well-wishing and good-willing; not the love of him as a *sinner,* but the love for him as a sentient being, who might be infinitely happy in obedience to his God. This is undoubtedly the true view to be taken of God's attitude towards sinners. What parent does not know what this is? You have felt the kindlings of indignation against the wickedness of your child, but blended with this you have also felt all the compassionate tenderness of a parent's heart.

The sinner sometimes says, It cannot be that God is angry with me, for he watches over me day by day; he feeds me from his table, and regales me with his bounties. Ah, sinner! you may be greatly mistaken in this matter. Don't deceive yourself! God is slow to anger indeed; that is, he is slow to *give expression* to his anger, and himself assigns the reason, because he is long suffering towards sinners, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But take care that you do not misconceive his real feeling towards you. Beware, lest you misinterpret his great forbearance. He waits, I know; but the storm of vengeance is gathering. How soon he may come forth out of his place and unlock suddenly all the whirlwinds of his vengeance! Ah, sinner! this once done, they will sleep no more.

8. It is plain that sinners do not realise God's anger, though they know it. If they do both know and realise it, they manifest a degree of hardihood in iniquity which is dreadful. But the fact is, they keep the thought of God's anger from their minds. They are reckless about it, and treat it as they do death. Sinners know they must die, but they do not realise this fact. They do not love to sit down and commune with death -- thinking how soon it may come, how certainly it will come; how the grave-worms will gnaw the flesh from their cheek-bones, and consume those eyes now bright and sparkling. These young ladies don't love to commune with such thoughts as these, and realise how soon these scenes will

be realities.

So you don't love to think of God's anger against sin, of his reasons for his anger, and of his great provocations. You probably don't like to hear me preach about it, and yet I preach as mildly as I can. You can't bear to hear the subject brought forward and pressed upon your attention. Tell me, are you in the habit of sitting down and considering this subject attentively? If you were to do so, you could not contemn God and treat him as if you had no care for him.

9. Are you aware, sinner, that you have made God your enemy, and have you thought how terrible a thing this is? Do you consider how impotent you are to withstand God? If you were in any measure dependent on any one of your fellowmen, you would not like to make him your enemy. The student in this college is careful not to make the faculty, or any one of them, his enemy. The child has the same solicitude in regard to his parent. Now consider what you are doing towards God -- that God who holds your breath in his hands, your very life, in his power. Let him only withdraw his hand, and you sink to hell by your own gravity. On a slippery steep you stand, and the billows of damnation roll below! O sinner! are you aware that when you lie down at night with your weapons of rebellion against God in your very hands, his blazing eye is on you? Are you well aware of this?

You may recollect the case of a Mr. H., once a student here. For a considerable time he had been rebellious against the truth of God as presented here to his mind, and this spirit of rebellion rose gradually to a higher and yet higher pitch. It seemed to have made about as much head as he could well bear, and in this state he retired to bed, and extinguished his light. All at once his room seemed full of dazzling splendour; he gazed around; there stood before him a glorious form -- with eyes of unearthly and most searching power; gradually all else disappeared save one eye, which shone with indescribable brilliancy and seemed to search him through and through. The impression made on his mind was awful. Oh! said he, I could not have lived under it many minutes if I had not yielded and bowed in submission to the will of God.

Sinner, have you ever considered that God's searching eye is on *you?* Do you think of it whenever you lie down at night? If you should live so long and should lie down again on your bed, think of it then. Write it down on a little card, and hang it where it will most often catch your eye, "*Thou God seest me*." Do this; and then realise that God's eye is penetrating your very heart. Oh that searching,

awful eye! You close your eyes to sleep -- still God's eye is on you. It closes not for the darkness of night. Do you say, "I shall sleep as usual -- I am not the sinner who will be kept awake through fear of God's wrath. Why should I be afraid of God? What have I to fear? I know indeed that God says 'Give me thy heart,' but I have no thought of doing it. I have disobeyed him many years and see no flaming wrath yet. I expect he will feed me still and fill my cup with every form of blessing." O sinner! for these very reasons have you the more cause to dread his burning wrath. You have abused his mercy well-nigh to the last moment of endurance. Oh how soon will his wrath break forth against thee! and no arm in all the universe can stay its whelming floods of ruin. And if you don't believe it, its coming will be all the more sure, speedy, and awful!

V. MEN INVITED TO REASON TOGETHER WITH GOD.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." -- Isaiah 1:18.

GOD is a moral agent. If he was not, he could not have moral character. That he has moral character is sufficiently manifest from the revealed fact that man is made in his image. Every man knows himself to have a moral constitution, and to be a moral being. It is also a fact that we necessarily conceive of God as a moral agent, and cannot rationally think otherwise.

God is also a good being -- not only moral, but holy and wise. He always acts upon good and sufficient reasons, and never irrationally and without reasons for his conduct.

Hence if we would appeal to God on any subject, we must address him as a good being, and must make our appeal through his intelligence, expecting him to be influenced more or less according as we present good and sufficient reasons.

God is always influenced by good reasons. Good reasons are more sure to have their due and full weight on his mind than on the mind of any other being in the universe. Nothing can be more certain than this, that if we present to him good reasons and such as ought to influence Him, he will be influenced as much as he ought to be. Upon this we may rest with unlimited confidence.

1. Entering now upon the direct consideration of our text, let us first inquire, *What is that to which this text invites us?*

"Come now, and let us *reason together*." But what are we to "reason" about? The passage proceeds to say, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." In the previous context God makes grievous and terrible charges against men. Their sins and hypocrisies and apostasies have been provoking beyond measure. Now, therefore, he comes down to look into their case, and see if there be any hope of repentance, and proceeds to make a proposal. Come now, he says, let us reason together. Come near if ye will reason with me. Produce your strong reasons why your God should forgive your great sin.

2. The invitation, coupled with the promises annexed, implies that there are good and sufficient reasons why God should forgive the penitent. Hence the case is fair for practical results. The way is open for salvation. Sinners may *so* present their reasons before God as to ensure success.

3. The nature of the case shows that we are to address our reasons and make our appeal, not to justice, but to mercy. We are to present reasons which will sanction the exercise of mercy. We have no hope from any appeal that we can make to justice. We must not come to *demand* the blessing we need; for it is assumed that our sins are as scarlet, and hence that there can be no such thing as a justification for them. Hence our inquiry is brought within fixed limits. We have only to search for those considerations which may induce the Lord to exercise mercy in our case.

Now since sinners need two great blessings, *viz*., pardon and sanctification, our subject naturally embraces two points:

I. THE REASONS WHICH MAY BE OFFERED WHY GOD SHOULD PARDON OUR SIN;

II. THE CORRESPONDING REASONS WHY HE SHOULD SANCTIFY OUR HEARTS.

I. *What reasons have we to present before God why he should forgive sin?*

I enter upon this inquiry, and bring up these reasons before your mind, in order to show you what reasons you may present before God, and to encourage you to present them.

1. You may plead that you entirely justify God in all his course. You must certainly take this position, for he cannot forgive you so long as you persist in self-justification. You know there is a breach of friendship between your soul and God. You have broken his laws. You either have good reason for your sin or you have not. If you have, God is wrong; if you have not, then *you* are wrong. You know how this case stands. You know beyond all question, with a force of reason that ought to silence all cavil, that all the wrong is on your side and all the right on God's side. You might and should know also that you must confess this. You need not expect God to forgive you till you do. He *ought* not to publish to the universe that he is wrong and you are right, when there is no truth in such a proclamation. Hence you see that you must confess what your conscience

affirms to be truth in the case.

Now, therefore, will you honestly say, not as the decision of your conscience merely, but as the utterance of your *heart*, that you do accept the punishment of your iniquities as just, and do honour and acquit your God in all the precepts of his law, and in all the course of his providence? Can you present this reason? So far as it goes, it is a good reason, and will certainly have its weight.

2. You may come to God and acknowledge that you have no apology whatever to make for your sin. You renounce the very idea of apology. The case, you deeply feel, admits of none.

3. You must also be ready to renounce all sin, and be able in all honesty to say this before God; you must utterly cease from all rebellion against God, and be able to say so from your very heart, else you can not reasonably expect to be forgiven.

4. You must unconditionally submit to his discretion. Nothing less than this is the fitting moral position for a sinner towards God. You must unqualifiedly surrender yourself to his will and utterly renounce your own. This will be an important element in your plea before God for pardon whenever you can honestly make it.

5. You may plead the life and death of Jesus Christ as sufficient to honour the law and justify God in showing mercy. It is plain that our reasons must reach other points besides our own state of mind. They must also refer to the penalty of law, and show that such arrangements are made as will insure the honour and sustain the dignity of the law, though sin be forgiven. Hence we see how much it is worth to us that we are able to plead before God that Christ has fully honoured the law, so that God can forgive sin without the danger of seeming to connive at it. It is everything to the purpose of a returning sinner that he may plead that forgiveness through Christ's death is safe to the government of God. Pardon must not put in peril the holiness or justice of Jehovah. The utmost expression he could make, or need to make, of his holiness and justice, as touching the sins of man, is already made in the death of Christ, "whom God did himself set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past . . . that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Now, therefore, can you say that you are willing to accept the sacrifice which he has made, and receive the gift of salvation through his blood as all of boundless grace, and in no sense or measure of meritorious works? If you can truly say this, it will become a strong reason before God why he should forgive you.

6. You may also urge his professed love for sinners. God has professed the greatest love for lost men; has even spoken of loving them "with an everlasting love," and you are at liberty to urge this when you come to reason together with God. You may plead that he has manifested this love in the gift of his dear Son, and hence you must be sure that you understand his language, and there cannot be any mistake in the matter. All your life long, too, he has been manifesting his love towards you in his kind providence; so that he has not ever left himself without witness to both the fact and the greatness of this love for the lost of our race.

7. He has also invited you to come and reason with him. Therefore he has fully opened the way for the freest and fullest communion on this point. With amazing condescension he suffers you to come before him and plead, filling your mouth with arguments. You may speak of all his promises, and of that solemn oath in which he sware by himself, to the end that they all "might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us in the gospel."

You may also plead his honour; that, seeing he is under oath, and stands committed before the universe, you may ask him what he will do for his great name if he refuses to forgive a repentant and believing sinner. You may plead all the relations and work of Christ. You may say to him, Lord, will it not induce other sinners to come to thee? Will it not encourage thy church to labour and pray more for salvation? Will not thy mercy shown to me prove a blessing to thousands?

You may urge the influence of refusing to do so. You may suggest that his refusal is liable to be greatly misapprehended; that it may be a scandal to many; and that the wicked will be emboldened to say that God has made no such exceeding great and precious promises.

You may urge that there is joy in heaven, and on earth also, over every sinner pardoned and saved; that the saints everywhere will be delighted, and will exceedingly rejoice in the Lord their God. The Psalmist represents the young

convert as saying, "The humble shall hear thereof and *be glad*." You may urge, that, since God loves to make saints happy in this world, he surely will not be averse to giving you his Spirit and putting away your sins -- it will cause such joy in the hearts of his dear people.

You may also plead the great abhorrence you have of living in sin, as you surely will unless he forgives you. You may also plead that God hates sin, and therefore must be more than willing to turn your heart away from sinning, and make it wholly pure before his eyes. You may urge on him the worth of your soul, a thing which he understands far better than you do, and which he shows that he appreciates, inasmuch as he gave up his only Son to die that souls might not perish. Ask him if he does not know what it is for a soul to be saved, and what it is for a soul to be lost, and tell him that the great question between these two momentous states is now pending in your case and must be soon decided for eternity! Ask him, if, after all he has done and said about salvation, he can refuse to save your perishing soul. Say, O my God, dost thou not know how much my soul is worth, and how certainly it is lost for ever unless thou interpose to save it?

You may mention before him your lost estate, that you are entirely dependent on his grace and mercy; that you are utterly lost to God, to happiness, and to heaven, unless he has mercy on you, and you may conjure him by the love of his dear Son to take all these things into consideration.

You may also allude to his merciful disposition, and suggest how often his word has affirmed that "the Lord delighteth in mercy," and that while "judgment is his strange work, mercy is his delight." Ask him if he will not gratify his own love of showing mercy, and give you the salvation you so much need. Remind him that here is a great opportunity to magnify his mercy, and display the riches of his grace, and make an impression on the minds of both saints and sinners greatly to his own honour and to their good. Tell him that to save one so lost and so vile as you cannot but glorify his great mercy as far as the case is known in earth, or hell, or heaven. Tell him how he has said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and ask him if he will not take advantage of this opportunity to show all men how he loves to act on this divine law of benevolence.

Tell him, moreover, how wretched you are, and must be in your sins, if you cannot find salvation, and what mischief you will be likely to do everywhere, on earth and in hell, if you are not forgiven and renewed in holiness. Tell him that it

is awful, and makes your soul shudder, to think of going on in sin, and of becoming hardened past all repentance. Remind him that he has invited you to come and reason with him, and that he has virtually promised to hear and to consider your case. You do not come to justify yourself, but only to plead his great mercy and what Christ has done for you. With these very strong reasons you come before him, on his own invitation, not to complain against his justice, but to intercede for his mercy; that you must beg of him to consider the awful ruin of hell, and that you cannot escape without his help, and cannot endure its everlasting horrors. He has himself said, "Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee?" Tell him -- your heart *cannot* endure this, and that this should be a strong reason why he should have mercy on your soul.

You also commit yourself entirely to his hands, and resign everything to his discretion and to his supreme disposal. Tell him you believe he will do the very best thing possible to him, all things considered, and that you shall by no means shrink from confiding your whole case to his disposal. You are not disposed to dictate or control what God shall do, but are willing to submit all to his wisdom and love. In fact, you have such confidence in him that you expect he will give you salvation, for you believe he has intended to encourage you to expect this great blessing, and on this ground you do expect to find mercy. You will therefore, at any rate, renounce all your sin henceforth and for ever. Say, "O Lord, thou knowest that I am purposed to renounce all sinning, and in this purpose I will persist, and die in it, if die I must, yea, go to hell, if so it must be, renouncing all my sin, and trusting in thy promised grace."

Let this be the manner of your reasoning together with God on this great question of the salvation of your soul.

II. *The reasons why He should sanctify our hearts*.

We must now notice a few reasons which may be urged by the pardoned sinner who pleads for *entire sanctification*.

1. You may plead your present justification. You have already found grace in his sight. This is a good reason to be used in your plea that he would fulfil all his promises to you, and not leave his great work, already begun, unfinished.

2. You may plead your relation to him, to the church, and to the world -- that,

having now been justified and adopted into his family, you are known as a Christian and a child of God, and it therefore becomes of the utmost consequence that you should have grace to live so as to adorn your profession, and honour the name by which you are called.

You may also plead your great responsibilities, and the weight of those interests that are depending upon your spiritual progress. Tell him you have publicly committed yourself to his faithfulness; that you have trusted that he would keep you blameless and henceforward make his grace sufficient for you. You have professed to rely upon sanctifying grace, and how can you bear now to fail of finding all you need and all you have professed to expect?

You should notice, also, the matter of your influence over others, especially the influence of your example. If it is known that you frequently fall into sin, how sad must be the influence! On the other hand, if God enables you to stand up and testify continually to his sustaining grace, what a testimony is this to his praise, and what a blessing to your Christian acquaintances!

Plead the desire you feel to be completely delivered from sin. Ask him if he has not given you this very desire himself, and inquire if he intends to sharpen your thirst and yet withhold the waters of life. Ask him if you must suppose that he means to enkindle the burning desire and yet leave it for ever unsatisfied.

Plead also his expressed will. Revert to that explicit avowal, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." Ask if he did not intend you should understand this as applicable to deliverance from *all* sin, and therefore as an unqualified expression of his desire and will that you should be altogether free from sin, even now. Ask if he has not so revealed his *will* on this point that you do not come to him in any uncertainty as to his will. Has he not in many forms, and in forms most clear and decisive, signified his wish that you should "perfect holiness," and rise quite above all the power of temptation? Remind him how he has pledged his word of grace and held out before you most encouraging promises.

Tell him, also, how the church needs such witnesses to testify what grace has done, and what they have themselves experienced. Refer to what the world is saying because the church is not sanctified, and show how great a scandal unsanctified professors are to their brethren, because they testify falsely to the rich provisions of gospel grace. Plead that the church has many of them fallen

almost out of sight of God's great grace, and so that they have become a sad stumbling-block to the world. Consider how much scandal and unbelief exist everywhere, and ask how these great evils can be removed and ever more prevented.

Appeal to his great love for you, as manifested in what Christ has done, and in his present office as your Advocate on high; as evinced, also, in the gift of the Spirit. Tell him you must and will confide in his love. Say, "I understand it; I must and will assume it, I cannot doubt, I must not disbelieve. I do not make my appeal to one who is an alien and a stranger, but to a kind and loving *Father*; and I come in simple confidence as his child." Say, "I dread to offend thee, and I long to live worthy of my vocation, and cannot endure to misrepresent that great and blessed grace on which my hope reposes."

So you must come to reason with your Heavenly Father. By no means forget to urge the love he has professed, and to throw yourself upon his faithfulness, pleading that he will fulfil to you all that he has promised and gloriously finish the work he has begun. Tell him how you have stumbled many by your falls into sin and have given great occasion of reproach to the cause you love; tell him you cannot live *so*, that you are ready to die under this awful burden. Cry out before him, "How have I given thine enemies occasion to doubt thy sanctifying grace and to disbelieve thy words of promise! O my Saviour! didst thou not give thyself to die for such a sinner as I am, to redeem me from all iniquity? and now, art thou willing that thy servants should be stumbled by me and fall over me into the depths of hell?"

Remind him, also, of your dependence on him, and that you set out in the Christian life with the understanding that without his grace to help, you could do nothing. Tell him you have consecrated yourself to him in distinct reliance upon his promised aid, and that you cannot endure to fall so far short of what you had hoped, and what you have promised and expected. Tell him of your willingness to make any sacrifice; that there is nothing you are unwilling to give up; that you are willing to forego your good name, and to lay your reputation wholly upon his altar; that there is not one sacrifice you are not willing to make; and you beg of him, if he sees a single thing held so dear to your heart that you are not willing to sacrifice it for his sake, to show you what it is, and press you to forsake it. Assure him that if self-denial comes in his service you are willing to meet all the consequences. You are ready to confess his grace to you, and not conceal it from

the great congregation. *Can you say this?* If so, do it. Tell him you are ready to die to the world -- ready to give it all up and renounce it utterly and for ever. You are determined you will have no more fellowship with the works of darkness -- to have the world become dead to you and you to the world. You are ready to meet all and bear all that the service of Christ may impose and involve. No matter if the world disowns you, and casts you out from its regard and fellowship. You have counted the cost and are ready to meet it all.

Urge, as a further reason, that you are willing to become dead to a worldly and unbelieving church; that you are ready to die even to their good opinion -- to be excommunicated if they will do it, to be cast out if they will cast you out. You shrink not from being reputed a heretic, if you may only have grace to overcome all sin and every temptation. You wish to please but one; and you are quite satisfied with pleasing God only. This shall be your object, and this, attained, shall fully satisfy your soul. You are willing to give up all idols and live to him alone. No matter if your name be cast out as evil and trodden down as vile, by the church, by her ministry, by all men, if you may only live to please God. Tell him you are willing to renounce all creature help and all earthly reliances, with only one great inquiry, *How can I most and best please God?*

Be sure to remind him that you intend to be wholly disinterested and unselfish in this matter; you ask these things not for your own present selfish interest; you are aware that a really holy life may subject you to much persecution; you know that "if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution;" and you are well aware that if you receive this cleansing, it may bring on you much persecution. You come not therefore to ask for present personal good, for you expect only greater trials; but you will consent to endure anything that does not involve sin. You want to represent him truly. You want to encourage all Christians, and all sinners too, to seek abounding grace by showing them how you have found mercy.

Then tell him of your great weakness, and how you entirely distrust yourself; how, ofttimes, you are covered with confusion and filled with shame, so that you cannot lift up your head, and you are constrained to cry, O my God! dost thou not pity thy child? Tell him you loathe yourself; that you would fain spue yourself out of your own mouth, because you so much dishonour him. Tell him you despair utterly of saving yourself, but that you still have unshaken confidence in him. Remind him, moreover, of his promises, and say that you are

encouraged because you know that you are asking mercy of a most gracious God. Tell him you shall go away greatly disappointed if you do not receive the grace you ask and need. As said a dear sister in a great struggle of her soul for spiritual blessings, "O my God, thou hast made me exceeding great and precious promises; now if thou dost not give me these blessings, what can I say any more for thee? How can I plead for thee if thou dost shut me up in my desolations? How can I ever again present thy strong claims to be believed and trusted as to all thy words of gracious promise?"

Thus making your strong issue, you come pleading not your goodness, but your badness; appealing not to God's justice, but to his mercy; telling him how poor you are and how rich he is, and that therefore you cannot bear to go away empty.

REMARKS.

1. Whenever we have considered the reasons for God's actions till they have really moved and persuaded us, they will surely move him. God is not slow -- never slower than we, to see the reasons for showing mercy and for leading us to holiness.

2. Many fail in coming to God because they do not treat him as a rational being. Instead of considering him as a rational being, they come without ever considering the reasons why he should and will forgive and sanctify. Of course, failing to have faith, and having views altogether dishonouring to God, they fail to get the blessing they seek.

3. Many do not present these reasons, because in honesty they cannot. Now God assumes that we ought to be in a state of mind to present all these reasons honestly. If we are not in such a state, we ought not to expect blessings.

4. When we want anything of God, we should always consider whether we can present good reasons why it should be granted. If you were to apply to any other being, e.g., your Governor, you would of course ask in the outset, Can I give any good reasons? If you are to appeal to justice, you must ask, Have I any good reasons to offer? So if you want favours on the score of mercy, what reasons have you to offer why they should be granted? If you have reasons, be sure to offer them, and by no means assume that you shall get your case without reasons.

5. All who are in any want are invited to come and bring forward their strong

reasons. If in sorrow, distress, affliction, come and present your plea. If you are a sinner, oppressed with a sense of sin, fear not to unbosom your heart before your God. All those who are under any afflictive dispensation should come, like Job, and tell God how deeply you are afflicted. Why not? Did not saints of old say to God, "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not?"

Christian parents, you are invited to come and present your strong reasons why your children should be converted. Come and tell God how much you need this blessing. Tell him you cannot endure that all your prayers in their behalf should come to naught, that the great labour of your life should fail, and worse than fail, as it must if your children of the covenant should disgrace religion and press their way through throngs of offered mercies down to hell.

Backsliders should come and tell God all their case. Ask him if he will not break your chains, and bring you back, and put a new song into your mouth, even of praise for recovering grace.

6. Of all beings, God is most easily influenced to save. He is by his very nature disposed to save the lost. He loves to let his mercies flow. You have only to bring forth your strong reasons, indeed you have only to come in the spirit of a child, trustful and lowly, and your case is gained. You need not come with a bribe; you need not come and offer pay. No; you have only to come and say, I want to serve God; for this end I need spiritual blessings. Tell him how much he has loved you, and how often and richly he has manifested this love; and plead that he would still show forth this same love yet more abundantly, that you may still follow on in his service, and nevermore be confounded and put to shame and sorrow for your own grievous sins.

7. We, of Oberlin, have peculiar reasons to urge why God should appear for the conversion and salvation of sinners among us. Just look here, brethren, you who have come here to embosom this institution with your influence and your prayers, have you no special reasons to urge why God should bless this place and sanctify this school, and convert to himself these precious souls? Oh, come and ask God if the growing people of this great nation, already outstripping the progress of the means of grace, must not become almost heathen, if his infinite mercy does not descend on all our schools and colleges and mould these young minds to himself! These young women, what shall their influence be when they become wives and mothers, and are scattered over the breadth of the land? And

these young men, destined to stand on the high places of social and moral power, shall the Great West feel their influence? and the distant South, shall it and its peculiar institutions feel the touch of their power? and the East, shall it know the weight of their principle and of their educated and sanctified talent? Oh, have we not reason to plead mightily with God! Oh, how many young palpitating hearts are here which need to be drawn into God's work and into the spirit of full consecration to the Lord of Hosts! Christians, have you no plea, no *special*, peculiar plea, to urge in behalf of interests so great and so pressing?

Sinners in Oberlin, have you not some plea to urge? O my stony heart, go not down to ruin from this Oberlin! Say rather, O my God, wash all my sins away! Oh fulfil thy promise and make me white as snow! Let me not die, but live and declare the high praises of my God for evermore!

VI. CONSCIENCE AND THE BIBLE IN HARMONY.

"By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." -- 2 Cor. 4:2.

THE context shows that these words of Paul refer to his manner of preaching, and to the aim which he had in those labours.

Conscience is a moral function of the reason, or intellect. It is that department of our natural faculties which has to do with moral subjects -- with morality and religion. This faculty gives us moral law and obligation; it has the idea of right and wrong, of praise or blame-worthiness, of desert, of retribution. It comprehends all the intuitions of the intellect on moral questions. The term is sometimes used to include those states of the sensibility which are occasioned by, and connected with, the action of conscience; yet, strictly speaking, the term is confined to the intellect, and does not embrace the sensibility.

Every man has a conscience. This is implied in our text. How could Paul commend himself in presenting the truth to every man's conscience if every man had *not* a conscience -- that is, if some men had no conscience at all? The existence of a conscience in every man is a fact of consciousness and one of facts. Every man knows that he has a conscience, and it is impossible he should know any fact with higher evidence, or with greater certainty, than he knows this. If he had no conscience, it would be impossible he should have the ideas of right and wrong, of good or ill desert, of virtue and of vice. No being could convey these ideas to his mind if he had not a conscience. No language could be of any use to convey such ideas if man had no conscience wherewith to apprehend and appreciate them.

These ideas of God, duty, right, and desert of retribution, belong to man -- to all men; are found in all men, and cannot be expelled from the human mind.

This faculty distinguishes man from the lower animals. Obviously they have some intellect; but whether they know by direct intuition, or in some other way, it seems impossible for us to determine. For example, we cannot ascertain whether the bee, in constructing his cells on the most perfect mathematical principles, gets his knowledge of this most perfect method by intuition or in some other process. Be this as it may, neither the bee nor any other of the lower animals has any moral law, or any ideas of moral character, of right and wrong,

of good or ill desert, or of retribution. This is the great characteristic difference between these animals and man. Hence, if any man sets up the claim that he has no conscience, he claims to be a brute, for he denies of himself the great distinction between the man and the brute.

Metaphysicians are not agreed whether brutes have sensibility and will, or not; they do agree that brutes have no conscience and no moral responsibility; so that those men who claim this distinction for themselves, put themselves at once by that claim on a level with the lower animals.

The Bible and the human conscience are at one, and entirely agree in all their moral decisions and teachings. This fact proves conclusively that they both come from the same author.

Beginning with our text, I ask, what can Paul mean in saying that, by manifestation of the truth, he commends himself to every man's conscience? Obviously this -- that by exhibiting to men the great truths of the gospel and of the law, he made his appeal to every man's conscience in a way and with sentiments that enforced each man's approval. The truth commended itself as truth; the claims of duty, as right. No man who understood this truth could doubt its evidence; none who understood its moral claims could dispute those claims.

But this point is so important that it should be examined in detail. I therefore remark, that conscience reveals the same rules of duty and the same measure of obligation as God's revealed law does. Conscience imposes the same law of love as God's law does -- love supreme towards God, love equal and impartial towards our neighbour. Conscience never fails to affirm that each man is bound to love his neighbour as himself. There never was a human being of developed and sane powers, whose conscience did not impose this obligation upon him.

Conscience also postulates this law as binding on all moral beings, and as extending to all the activities of every moral being. In fact, conscience and reason show that this is the only possible law or rule of duty for moral beings; and the Bible teaches the very same in every particular. Both are entirely at one in all their teachings on this great subject.

Both conscience and the Bible harmonise, also, in this -- that man, in his natural state, has entirely fallen from duty. Conscience universally affirms that men do not, apart from grace, love God with all their heart, nor their neighbours as

themselves. The human conscience proclaims man in a state of total moral depravity; so does the Bible. Conscience affirms that nothing, short of full obedience to God's law of love, is real virtue; and so does the Bible. Conscience presses the sinner with a sense of guilt, and holds him condemned; and so does the Bible. And each decides by the same rule in every respect. You may take each individual precept you find in the law and the gospel; go into the examination ever so minutely; canvass all the teachings of Jesus Christ, all those of the apostles and of the prophets, you will find that conscience says amen to them all.

What a remarkable fact is this! Here is a book containing myriads of precepts -- that is, if you enumerate all the specific applications; yet they are comprised under two great principles -- supreme love to God, and equal love to our fellow-man. But in all these countless specific applications of these great principles, whatever the Bible affirms, conscience endorses. This is a most remarkable fact. It never has been true of any other book, that all its moral precepts without exception are approved and endorsed by the human conscience. This book so endorsed, must be inspired of God. It is impossible to suppose that a book so accredited of conscience can be uninspired. It is the greatest absurdity to deny its inspiration. A book so perfectly in harmony with conscience must come from the author of conscience.

Men said of Christ when he taught, "Never man spake like this man" so wonderfully did the truths taught commend themselves to every man's conscience. He spake "*with authority*," and "not as the scribes," for every word went home to man's conscience, and every precept revealing duty, was recognised and endorsed as right by the hearer's own convictions. This striking feature characterised all his teachings.

Both the Bible and conscience harmonise in respect to the requisition of *repentance*. Each affirms this to be every man's duty. Each rests this claim on the same ground, to wit, that God is right and the sinner wrong; and, therefore, that the sinner ought to turn to God in submission, and not God turn to the sinner in a change of his course.

In like manner, both conscience and the Bible harmonise in the requisition of faith and of entire holiness. On all these great gospel precepts, the Bible affirms and conscience responds most fully. As to the demand of entire holiness, it is a clear dictate of our moral sense that we cannot enjoy God without being like

him. When our intelligence apprehends the true character of God and of man, it recognises at once, the necessity that man should be like God in moral character, in order to enjoy his presence. Beings possessed of a moral nature can never be happy together unless their spirits are congenial.

Conscience affirms man's position as a sinner to be wrong; so does the Bible. It is impossible for a sinner to believe that his sin is right and pleasing to God. This, also, is the doctrine of the Bible.

Conscience affirms the necessity of an atonement. Mankind have always felt this necessity, and have manifested this feeling in many ways. Through all ages they have been devising and practising some form of sacrifice to render it proper for God to forgive the sinner. The idea has been in their mind that God must demand some sacrifice that would honour his law and sustain its injured majesty. That the law has been dishonoured by the sinner, all have fully admitted. And obviously the idea has been in the minds of men that it would be dishonourable, degrading, and injurious to God, to forgive sin without some atonement. They seem to have apprehended the great truth that, before God can forgive sin, he must demand some demonstration which shall sustain law and evince his own position and feelings as a lawgiver. How, but from these universal affirmations of conscience, can you account for the fact that all mankind have felt the necessity for some mediator between God and man? So universal is this felt necessary that when men have had their conscience aroused, and have been in doubt or in darkness as to Christ, the Mediator, they have plunged into despair. If conscience sleeps, the sinner may pass along with little concern; but when it arouses itself like a mighty man, and puts forth its emphatic announcements, then no sinner can resist. It is a well-known fact that Unitarians, when thoroughly convicted of sin, can find no rest in their system of religious belief. I am well aware that so long as their conscience is not aroused to its functions, and they are in great darkness, they can say, "Man is pretty good by nature, and I see no need of a vicarious atonement. I accept Christ as a good man, an excellent teacher, and a fine example; but what do I want of an atoning sacrifice?" So he can say, till conscience wakes up its voice of seven thunders. Then he cries out, "I am undone. How can I live if there be not some atoning sacrifice for my sins?"

There never was a sinner, awakened to see his sins truly, who did not go into despair unless he saw the atonement. I could give you many cases of this sort which have fallen under my own observation, in which persons, long denying

the need of any atonement, have at length had conscience fully aroused, and have then invariably felt that God could not forgive unless in some way his insulted majesty were vindicated.

Indeed, God might be perfectly ready to forgive, so far as his feelings are concerned; for he is not vindictive; neither is he implacable; but he is a moral governor, and has a character, as such, to sustain. The interests of his created universe rest on his administration, and he must take care what impression he makes on the minds of beings who can sin.

In this light we can appreciate the propensity, always felt by the human mind, to put some mediator between a holy God and itself. Catholics interpose saints and the Virgin -- supposing that these will have a kind of access to God which they, in their guilt, cannot have. Thus conscience recognises the universal need of an atonement.

The Bible everywhere reveals the adequacy of the atonement made by Christ; and it is remarkable that the human conscience also promptly accepts it as sufficient. You may arouse the conscience as deeply as you please -- may set it all on fire, and yet, as soon as the atonement of Christ is revealed, and the mind understands what it is, and what relations it sustains to law and government, suddenly conscience is quiet; the sense of condemnation is gone; the assurance of an adequate atonement restores peace to the troubled soul. Conscience fully accepts this atonement as amply sufficient, even as the Bible also does.

But nothing else than this atonement can satisfy conscience: not good works, ever so many or so costly; not penance, not any amount of self-imposed suffering and sacrifice. Let a sinner attempt to substitute ever so much prayer and fasting, in place of Christ, as an atoning sacrifice, it is all of no avail. The more he tries the more he is dissatisfied. Conscience will not accept it. Neither will the Bible. Most wonderfully, we find it still true, to whatever point we turn, that conscience and the Bible bear the same testimony, take the same positions.

But how does this happen? Whence comes this universal harmony? This is a problem for those to solve who deny the inspiration of God's word. Those who admit its inspiration have only to refer both to the same Author. It is no strange thing on their theory, that God's voice in the Bible, and God's voice in the bosom of man, should utter the same notes, each responsive to the other, and each affirming or denying in perpetual unison.

Both the human conscience and the Bible teach justification by faith. I do not suppose the human conscience could have revealed to us the fact of the death of Christ; but the Bible having revealed it, the conscience can and does appreciate its fitness and adequacy, and, therefore, can and does accept this sacrifice as a ground of justification before God. It recognises the sinner as brought into a state of acceptance with God on the ground of what Christ has suffered and done. What can be the reason that faith in Christ has such wonderful power to extract the smart of sin, take away the sense of condemnation, and give the consciousness of being accepted of God? The fact we see developed every day. You cannot make the mind afraid of punishment when once it rests in Christ Jesus. You cannot create a sense of condemnation while your heart has an active faith in the blood of Christ. By no methods you can employ, can you force it upon the soul. With faith there will be hope and peace, despite of all your efforts to dislodge them. When the soul really embraces Christ, peace will ensue. The truth is, the provisions of the gospel for the pardon of sin meet the demands of conscience. It affirms that God is just, and therefore is satisfied, while he justifies the penitent believer in Jesus. It is the province of conscience to affirm the propriety or impropriety of God's moral conduct, as well as man's; and hence, it moves only within its sphere when it affirms that God can rightly accept such a satisfaction as that made in the atonement of Christ for sin.

Conscience affirms that there can be no other conceivable way of justifying the sinner except by faith in Christ. You may try ever so much to devise some other scheme, yet you cannot. You may try to get peace of mind on any other scheme than this -- as some of you have -- but all is of no avail. I once said to a Roman Catholic, "When you went to confessional you hoped to be accepted and to get peace?" "Yes." "But did you find it to your full satisfaction?" "Not certainly. I cannot say that I knew I was accepted."

There never was a Catholic who had been through all their ceremonies, and afterwards, being converted to faith in Christ alone, experienced the deep peace of the gospel, who did not see the wide difference between his experience as a Papist and his experience as a gospel believer. His conscience so completely accepts his faith in the latter case and gives him such deep, assured peace; while in the former case there could be nothing of this sort.

The Bible and conscience agree in affirming the doctrine of endless punishment. Conscience could teach nothing else. At what period in the lapse of future ages

of suffering would conscience say, "He has suffered enough. The law of God is satisfied; his desert of punishment for sin is now exhausted, and he deserves no more?" Those who know anything about the decisions of conscience on this point, know very well that it can conceive of no limitations of ill-desert for sin. It can see no end to the punishment which sin deserves. It can conceive of the man who has once thus sinned, as being nothing else but a sinner before God, since the fact of his having sinned can never cease to be a fact. If you have been a thief, that fact will always be true, and in that sense you must always be a thief in the eye of law. You cannot make it otherwise. Your suffering can make no sort of satisfaction to an offended law. Conscience will see more and more guilt in your course of sin, and your sense of guilt must increase to all eternity. You can never reach the point where conscience will say, "This suffering is enough; this sinner ought to suffer no longer." The Bible teaches the same.

Yet each agree in teaching that God can forgive the penitent through faith in Christ, but can extend forgiveness to no sinner on any other ground.

REMARKS.

1. We see why the Bible is so readily received as from God. Few have ever read any treatise of argument on this subject; but as soon as one reads those parts which relate to morals, conscience at once affirms and endorses all. You need no higher evidence that he who speaks in the Bible is very God. The truth commends itself to every man's conscience, and needs no other endorser of its divine origin. Probably in all this congregation not one in fifty ever sat down to read through a treatise on the evidences of a divine revelation; and you can give perhaps no other reason for your belief in the Bible than the fact that it commends itself to your conscience.

2. You see why one who has seen this harmony between conscience and the Bible, cannot be reasoned out of his belief in the Bible by any amount of subtle sophistry. Perhaps he will say to his opponent, "I cannot meet your sophistries; I have never speculated in that direction; but I *know the Bible is true*, and the whole gospel is from God. I know it by the affirmations of my own mind. I know it by its perfect fitness to meet my wants. I know it has told me all I ever felt, or have ever needed, and it has brought a perfect supply for all my need." This he can say in reply to sophistry which he may have no other logic to withstand. But this is amply sufficient.

In my own case, I know it was the beauty and intrinsic evidence of the Bible which kept me from being an infidel. I should have been an infidel if I could, and I should have been a Universalist if I could have been, for I was wicked enough to have been either. But I knew the Bible to be true; and when I set myself to make out an argument against it, I could not divest myself of an ever-present conviction that this was the wrong side. Just as a lawyer who sits down to examine a case, and finds at every turn that his evidence is weak or irrelevant, and is troubled with a growing conviction that he is on the wrong side; and the more he examines his case and his law books, the more he sees that he must be wrong -- so I found it in my investigations into the evidences of revelation, and in my readings of the Bible. In those times I was wicked enough for anything, and used to go out among the plain Christian people and talk to them about the Bible, and puzzle them with my questions and hard points. I could confound, even though I could not convince them, and then I would try to enjoy my sport at their expense. Sometimes afterwards, I would go and tell them I could show them how they settled this question of the divine authority of the Bible, although they could not tell me.

I don't believe there ever was, or ever can be, a candid man who shall candidly examine the Bible, compare its teachings with the affirmations of his own conscience, and then deny its authority.

3. Neither Paul nor Jesus Christ preached sermons on the evidences of a revelation from God; how was it, then, that Christ brought out the truth in such a way as to reach the conscience, wake up its energies, and make it speak out in fearful tones? He manifested the truth in such a way as to commend it to every man's conscience.

4. Just in proportion as a man fails to develop his conscience, or blinds, abuses, or silences it, can he become sceptical. It will always be so far *only as* his conscience becomes seared and blind; while, on the other hand, as his conscience has free scope and speaks out truthfully, will his conviction become irresistible that the Bible is true and from God.

5. The Bible is sometimes rejected because misunderstood. I once fell in with an infidel who had read much (not in the Bible) and who, after his much reading, settled down upon infidelity. I inquired of him as to his views of the inspiration of the Bible, when he promptly replied, "I know it is not true, and is not from God, for it teaches things contrary to my conscience." "Ah," said I, "and pray tell

me in what particulars! What are these things, taught in the Bible, that are contrary to your conscience?"

He began thus:

(1) "It teaches the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity." "But stop," said I, "is that Bible, or is it only catechism?" He soon found that he had to look in his catechism to find it, for it was not in his Bible.

(2) "It teaches that human nature, as made by God, is itself sinful." I soon showed him that the Bible said no such thing. He declared that this doctrine was contrary to his conscience; I admitted it, but vindicated the Bible from such impiety as ascribing the creation of sin to God.

(3) "But," said he, "the Bible certainly does teach that men are naturally unable to obey God, and, especially, are unable to repent and believe the gospel." I replied, "That is neither taught nor implied in the Bible, in the sense in which you urge it; but, on the contrary, the Bible both teaches and implies that sinners can obey God, and are for that very reason responsible, and guilty if they refuse."

(4) There was one other point on which all the books were clear and strong, but which was utterly against his conscience, namely, that Christ was punished for our sins. "This punishing the innocent instead of the guilty," he said, "was one of the most unjust things that could be imagined." "Well," said I, "that is just what the Bible does *not* teach. It nowhere holds the doctrine that Christ was *punished* as a criminal. Punishment implies guilt, and is inflicted as penalty for crime, neither of which is true in the case of Christ. He only suffered as an innocent being, and of his own free accord. You cannot say that this is wrong. If one man in his benevolence *chooses* to suffer for another, no principle of justice is violated." This he conceded.

(5) "According to the Bible," said he, "none can be saved without having their natures constitutionally changed. But no man can be held responsible for changing his own constitution." Here, too, I showed him his misapprehension of the Bible. The change is only that which pertains primarily to the voluntary powers, and of course is just that which man is made capable of doing, and which he must do himself.

(6) He urged, I think, but one point more, namely, "that God has elected some to

be saved, and some to be damned, and that none can escape their foreordained destiny." To this you know I would rely that the Bible did not teach *such* an election, nor authorise such an inference, but everywhere implied the opposite. Such was our discussion.

You doubtless all know that such mistakes as these have led some men to reject the Bible. It is not strange that they should. I could never have received the Bible as from God if I had believed it to teach these things. I had to learn first that those things were not in the Bible, and then I was prepared to accept it in accordance with my conscience and reason, and from God.

6. Scepticism always evinces either great wickedness, or great ignorance as to what the Bible teaches, and as to the evidence on which its claims rest. Both the nature of the case and the testimony of observation conspire to prove this.

7. All the truths of natural religion are taught and affirmed both in the conscience and in the Bible. This is a most remarkable fact; yet easily shown in the fullest detail.

8. The conscience recognises the Bible as its own book -- the book of the heart -- a sort of supplement to its own imperfect system -- readily answering those questions which lie beyond the range of vision, which conscience enjoys. There are questions which conscience must ask, but cannot answer. It must ask whether there is any way in which God can forgive sin, and, if so, what is it. Such questions conscience cannot answer without help from revelation. It is striking to observe how conscience grasps these glorious truths when they are presented, and the heart has come to feel its need of God's light and love. Mark how, when the moral nature of man has sent forth its voice abroad over the universe, far as its notes can reach, imploring light, and crying aloud for help, and listening to learn if any response is made; then when it catches these responsive notes from God's written revelation, it shouts *amen!* AMEN! that brings *me salvation!* Let God be praised!

9. The sceptic is obliged to ignore the teachings of his own nature and the voice of his conscience. All those moral affirmations must be kept out of sight, or he could not remain an infidel. It will not do for him to commune with his own heart, and ask what testimony conscience bears as to duty, truth, and his God. All he can do to smother the spontaneous utterance of his conscience, he must needs do, for the sake of peace in his sin and scepticism.

10. But these efforts must be ultimately vain, for, sooner or later, conscience will speak out. Its voice, long smothered, will break forth with redoubled force, as if in retribution for being abused so long. Many may *live* sceptics; few can *die* such. To that *few* you cannot hope to belong; you already know too much on this subject. You cannot satisfy yourself that the Bible is false, and make yourself disbelieve its divine authority, so that it will *stay disbelieved*. Such a notion, resting on no valid evidence, but starting up under the stimulus of a corrupt heart, will disappear when moral realities shall begin to press hard on your soul. I am aware that in these latter times some young men make the discovery that they know more and are wiser than all the greatest and best men that have ever lived. They think so, but they may, in divine mercy, live long enough to unlearn this folly, and to lay off this self-conceit. One thing I must tell you, *You cannot die sceptics*, you cannot die believing that God can accept you without faith in Christ. Do you ask, Why? Because you have heard too much truth. Even this afternoon you have heard too much to allow you to carry such a delusion to your graves. No! you cannot die in darkness and delusion. I beg you to remember when you come to die, that I told you, you could not die a sceptic. Mark my words, *then* and prove them false if you can. Write it down for a memorandum, and treasure it for a test in the trying hour -- that I told you solemnly, you could not die a sceptic. It will do you no hurt to remember this one thing from me; for if you should in that hour find me mistaken, you can have none the less comfort of your infidelity. It is not improbable that I shall be at the death-bed of some of you this very summer. Not a summer has passed yet since I have been here that I have not stood by the dying bed of some dear young man. And shall I find you happy in the dark discomfort of infidelity? There is no happiness in it; and if there were, *you* cannot have it, for not one of you *can die an infidel!* Dr. Nelson once informed me that he said this same thing to a young infidel. Not long after, this infidel was sick, and thought himself dying, yet his infidelity remained unshaken; and when he saw the Doctor next, he cast into his teeth that prediction, which he thought had been triumphantly disproved. "Dr. N.," said he, "I was dying last month; and, contrary to your strange prediction, my infidelity did not forsake me." "Ah!" said the Doctor, "but you were not dying then! And you never can die an infidel!" When that young man came to die, he did not die an infidel. His conscience spake out in awful thunders, and his soul trembled exceedingly as it passed from this to another world.

But such fears may come too late! The door perhaps is shut, and the soul is lost!

Alas, that you should lose eternal life for a reason so poor, for a compensation so insignificant!

VII. SALVATION DIFFICULT TO THE CHRISTIAN, IMPOSSIBLE TO THE SINNER.

"If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" -- 1 Peter. 4:18.

FROM the connection of this passage, some have inferred that the apostle had his eye immediately upon the destruction of Jerusalem. They suppose this great and fearful event to be alluded to in the language, For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? *This may* refer to the destruction of the city and temple of God's ancient people, yet the evidence for the opinion does not seem to be decisive. A reference to the event is possible and even probable. We know that when Jerusalem was destroyed, not one Christian perished. They had timely notice in the signs Christ had already given them, and perceiving those signs in season, they all fled to Pella, on the east of the Jordan, and hence were not involved in the general destruction.

But whether Peter refers to this particular event or not, one thing is plain: he recognises a principle in the government of God, namely, *that the righteous will be saved, though with difficulty, but the wicked will not be saved at all*. It is plain throughout this whole chapter that Peter had his mind upon the broad distinction between the righteous and the wicked -- a distinction which was strikingly illustrated in the destruction of Jerusalem, and which can never lack illustrations under the moral and providential government of a holy God.

The salvation of the righteous, though certain, is difficult. Though saved, they will be *scarcely saved*. On this basis rests the argument of the apostle, that if their salvation be so difficult, the sinner cannot be saved at all. His salvation is utterly impossible. This is plainly the doctrine of the text. It had a striking exemplification in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the passage, as I have said, may or may not have reference to that event. All students of the Bible know that this great destruction is often held up as a type or model of the final judgment of the world. It was a great event on the page of Jewish history, and certainly had great significance as an illustration of God's dealings towards our sinning race.

In pursuing this subject, I purpose to show,

I. WHY THE SALVATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS DIFFICULT;

II. WHY THE SALVATION OF THE SINNER IS IMPOSSIBLE;

III. ANSWER THE QUESTION OF THE TEXT, WHERE SHALL THE UNGODLY AND THE SINNER APPEAR?

The difficulty in the salvation of either the righteous or the wicked turns not on any want of mercy in the heart of God. It is not because God is implacable and hard to be appeased: this is not the reason why the salvation of even the sinner is impossible.

Again, it is not in any lack of provision in the atonement to cover all the wants of sinners, and, even to make propitiation for the sins of the world. The Bible nowhere raises the question as to the entire sufficiency of the atonement to do all that an atonement can do or need do for the salvation of our race.

But, positively, one difficulty is found in the nature of God's government, and in the nature of free agency in this world. God has so constituted man as to limit himself to one mode of government over him. This must be moral, and not physical. It must be done by action upon mind *as mind,* and not by such *force as* applies legitimately to move *matter*. If the nature of the case admitted the use of physical force, it would be infinitely easy for God to move and sway such puny creatures as we are. That physical omnipotence which sweeps the heavens and upholds the universe could find no difficulty in moving lumps of clay so small and insignificant as we. But mind cannot be moved as God moves the planets. Physical force can have no direct application to mind for the purpose of determining its moral action. If it should act upon mind as it does upon matter, we certainly know there could be neither moral action nor moral character in such beings as we are. We could not have even a conception of moral conduct. How then could the thing itself possibly exist?

Men are placed under God's government with such a created constitution and such established relations to it that they must act freely. God has made them capable of controlling their own moral conduct by the free action of their own wills, and now he expects and requires them to choose between his service and rebellion. Such being the case, the great difficulty is *to persuade sinners to choose right*. God is infinitely ready to forgive them if they will repent; but the great problem is to persuade them to do so. They are to be prepared for heaven. For this, an entire change of moral character is requisite. This could be done with the utmost ease, if nothing more were needful than to take them into some

Jordan stream and wash them, physically, as if from some external pollution, and God should be pleased to employ physical power for this purpose. But the change needed being in its nature *moral*, the means employed must be moral. All the influence must be of a moral character.

Now everybody knows that a moral agent must be able, in the proper sense of this term, to resist every degree of moral influence. Else he cannot be a moral agent. His action must be responsible action, and therefore must be performed of his own free will and accord, no power interposing of such a sort or in such measure as to overbear or interfere with his own responsible agency. Hence the necessity of moral means to convert sinners, to gain their voluntary consent in this great change from sin to holiness, from disobeying to obeying God. And hence the need that this change be wrought, ultimately, by moral means alone.

God may and does employ physical agencies to act morally, but never to act physically. He may send sickness, to reach the heart, but not to purge away any sort of physical sin.

There are a great many difficulties in the way of converting sinners, and saving them when once converted: many which people are prone to overlook. Hence we must go into some detail, in order to make this matter plain.

One class of these difficulties is the result of an abused constitution. When Adam and Eve were created, their appetites were doubtless mild and moderate. They did not live to please themselves and gratify their own appetites. Their deep and all-engrossing desire and purpose to please God was the law of their entire activities. For a time, therefore, they walked in holy obedience, until temptation came in a particular form, and they sinned. Sin introduced another law -- the law of self-indulgence. Every one knows how terribly this law tends to perpetuate and strengthen itself. Every one knows the fearful sway it gains so rapidly over the whole being when once enthroned in power. Now, therefore, the beautiful order and subordination which in holiness obtained throughout all their active powers, was broken up and subverted under the reign of sin. Their appetites lost their proper balance. No longer subordinate to reason and to God, they became inordinate, clamorous, despotic.

Precisely in this does sin consist -- in the irrational gratification of the appetites and passions. This is the form in which it appeared in our first parents. Such are its developments in all the race.

Now in order to save men, they must be brought back from this, and restored to a state in which God and reason control the free action of the mind, and appetite is held in due subjection.

Now here let me be understood. The want of balance, the moral disorder of which I speak, is not this, that the will has become enslaved, and has lost its inherent power of free moral action. This is not the difficulty, but the thing is, that the sensibility has been enormously developed, and the mind accustoms itself to yield to the demands it makes for indulgence.

Here is the difficulty. Some have formed habits and have confirmed them until they have become immensely strong, and it becomes exceedingly difficult to induce them to break away. The rescue must be effected by moral, not by physical means, and the problem is to make the moral means powerful enough for the purpose.

Again, we must notice, among the difficulties in question, the entanglements of a multitude of circumstances. I have often thought it well for Christians that they do not see all their difficulties at first. If they did, its discouraging effect might be disastrous. Coming upon the mind while it is poising the elements of the great question -- a life of sin or a life of holiness; or, after conversion, falling in their power upon the mind while yet its purpose to serve God is but little confirmed, the result might be not only greatly trying, but perhaps fatal. But the ways of God in this, as in all things, are admirable. He does not let them see all their future difficulties at first, but lets them come up from time to time in succession, as they have strength to meet them and overcome.

The great difficulty is, living to please self rather than God. It is wonderful to see how much this difficulty is enhanced by the agency Satan and sin have had in the framework of society. It would seem that a bait is held before every man, whatever his position and circumstances may be. One cannot but be astonished at the number of baits provided and laid in the habits and usages, we might perhaps say, in the very construction and constitution, of society. See how men are interlocked in the relations of life, partners in business, associates in pleasure; attached in the more endearing and permanent relations of life, husbands and wives, lovers and loved, parents and children. How many influences of a moral sort, and often tempting to sin, grow out of each, and, oh, how many out of all these complicated and various relations! Youth of both sexes are educated -- perhaps together, perhaps apart; yet in either case there

arises a host of social attractions, and in the history of the race, who does not know that often the resulting influences are evil? The troubles and cares of business -- how often do they "like a wild deluge come," and overwhelm the soul that else would "consider its ways and turn its feet unto God's testimonies"! How complicated are the sources of irritation that provoke men's spirits to ill-temper, and ensnare them thus into sin! Many times we marvel and say, What amazing grace is needful here! What power, less than Almighty, could pluck God's children from such a network of snares and toils, and plant them at last on the high ground of established holiness!

There is a man chained to a wife who is a constant source of temptation and trial to him. There is a wife who sees scarce a peaceful moment in all her life with her husband, all is vexation and sorrow of spirit.

Many parents have children who are a constant trial to them. They are indolent, or they are reckless, or they are self-willed and obstinate. Their own tempers perhaps are chafed, and they become a sore temptation to a similar state of chafed and fretted temper in their parents. On the other hand, children may have equal trials in their parents. Where can you find a family in which the several members are not in some way a source of trial to each other! Sometimes the temptation comes in an appeal to their ambition and pride. Their children have some qualities for the parents to be proud of and this becomes a snare to parents and children both. Oh, how complicated are the temptations which cross and re-cross every pathway of human life! Who but God can save against the power of such temptations?

Many children have been brought up in error. Their parents have held erroneous opinions, and they have had their moral constitution saturated with this influence from their cradle and upwards. How terrible such an influence must inevitably be!

Or, the business of their parents may have been such as to miseducate them -- as the business of rum-selling, for example, and who does not know how terribly this kind of influence cleaves to a man, even as his skin, and seems to become a part of him by pervading the very tissues of his soul!

When the mind gives itself up to self-indulgence, and a host of appetites became clamorous and impetuous, what a labour it must be to bring the soul into harmony with God! How many impulses must be withstood and overcome; how

great the change that must be wrought in both the physical and moral state of the man! No wonder that the devil flatters himself that he has got the race of depraved men into his snares and can lead them captive at his will. Think how many thousand years he has been planning and scheming, studying human nature and the laws of depravity, that he may make himself fully master of the hellish art of seducing moral agents away from God and holiness. The truth is, we scarcely begin to realise how artful a devil we have to encounter. We scarcely begin to see how potent an adversary is he who, "like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour," and who must be resisted and overcome, or we are not saved.

Many are not aware of the labour necessary to get rid of the influence of a bad education. I speak now of education in the broad, comprehensive sense -- embracing all that moulds the habits, the temper, the affections, as well as develops the intellect. Ofttimes the affections become unhappily attached, yet the attachment is exceedingly strong, and it shall seem like the sundering of the very heart-strings to break it off. This attachment may fasten upon friends, wives, husbands, or children; it may make gold its god, and bow down to such an image. Sometimes we are quite inadequate to judge of the strength of this attachment, except as we may see what strange and terrible means God is compelled to use to sever it. Oh, how does he look with careful, tearful pity upon his entangled and endangered children, marking the bands that are coiled around their hearts to bind them to earth, and contriving how he can best sunder those bands and draw back their wandering hearts to himself! We know he never does afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men -- never his people but for their profit, that they may partake of his holiness; yet who does not know how often he is compelled to bring tears from their eyes; to wring their hearts with many sorrows; to tear from them many a fond and loved object of their affections -- else he could not save them from their propensities towards sin and self-indulgence! Oh, what a work is this which Christ undertakes that he may save his people from their sins! How strange and how complicated are the difficulties! Who could overcome them but God!

Again, the darkness of nature is so great and so gross, that it must be an exceedingly great work to save them from its influence, and pour the true light of God through their intelligence. It is by no means sufficient to know the mere theory of religion, or to know all of religion that the human mind, unenlightened by the Divine Spirit, can know. Indeed, Christians never know themselves except

as they see themselves in God's own light. They need to see God's character in its real nature, and then, in view of what God is, they can see and estimate themselves rightly. This is one important part of the truth on this subject; and another point is, that God himself by his Spirit becomes the teacher of the humble and trustful, and so enlightens the understanding that divine truth can be seen in its real colours and just proportions. And now do you say, O God, show me what I am, and make me know my own heart thoroughly? Did you ever find yourself in doubt and perplexity about your own state, and then, crying for help and light unto God, has he not answered your prayer by first revealing himself and his own character, so that in the light reflected from his character you saw your own, and in the light of his principles of action you saw your own, and in the light shown you as to his heart you also saw your own? You do not see your own state of mind by simply inverting your mental eye and looking within, but by being drawn so near to God that you come into real and deep sympathy with him. Then, seeing and knowing God, you see and know yourself. You cannot help seeing whether your heart responds in sympathy and aim with his, and this very fact reveals your own heart to yourself. It is wonderful how much the Christian learns of himself by truly learning God; and it is not less a matter of wonder and admiration that Christians should experience such moral transformations by simply knowing God, and by being drawn into sympathy with him the more as the more they know him. The great difficulty is that Christians are shy of God -- shy, especially as soon as they relapse into the spirit of the world. Then they find an almost resistless inclination to *keep off*, to hold themselves aloof from anything like close communion with God. Hence God is compelled to draw them back, to discipline them with afflictions, to spoil their idols, and dash in pieces their graven images. Always awake and on the alert so the Bible represents it: "He that keepeth Israel shall never slumber or sleep." By day and by night he watcheth, and "keepeth them as the apple of his eye!" How wonderful is such condescension and loving kindness!

Finally, the greatness of the change requisite in passing from sin to real holiness -- from Satan's kingdom into full fitness for Christ's, creates no small difficulty in the way of saving even the converted. It is difficult, nay impossible, to make men see this all at once; and, indeed, if the Christian were to see it all at once, it would not unlikely overwhelm him in despair. Hence God wisely lets him see enough to impress strongly his need of divine aid, and enough to make him cry out, "Who then can be saved?"

REMARKS.

But I must make some remarks in application of the subject so far discussed, and reserve the consideration of our remaining points to another time.

We see why the Scriptures are so full of exhortations to Christians to *run*, RUN, and especially to run by *rule*. "He that striveth for the mastery must by all means *strive lawfully*," i. e., according to the rules in such cases made and provided. So let the Christian be careful not only that he runs, but that he runs the right way and in the right manner.

We see, also, why the Christian is exhorted in like manner to fight, grasping the sword, buckling on the shield, putting on the helmet of salvation, preparing himself in all points for a warlike march through an enemy's country, where fighting must be looked for day and night.

Coupled with this is the fitting exhortation to stand fast -- to plant his feet firmly and brace himself with all his strength, as if the enemies' hosts were about to charge with the deadly bayonet. Stand fast, their Captain shouteth; play the man for your king and for yourselves, for the enemy are down upon you in strength and in wrath!

Agonise too, struggle; for fierce will the conflict be. It is no contemptible foe whom you must face. The Scriptures represent that only the violent take this kingdom of God, and they do it "*by force*." What could be more expressive of the energy to be put forth by Christ's people if they would win the victory and wear the crown?

We see why Christians are represented as *wrestling*, like men in personal struggle for the mastery. They have a personal enemy to fight and to subdue.

They must, however, give all diligence. A lazy man cannot get to heaven. To get there costs toil and labour. For his will must be sanctified. The entire voluntary department of his being must be renovated. It is remarkable how the Christian warfare develops the will. Not an obstinate will -- not a self-will, do I mean, but a strong and firm will. The man, disciplined in the Christian conflict, cries out, I must and I *will* believe; I will *trust*.

The Christian is also commanded to *watch* -- *not* to close his eyes for a little more sleep and a little more slumber. His condition is one of hourly peril, and

therefore, what Christ says to one, he says to *all* -- WATCH. We can see the reason for this in the light revealed from our subject.

We see, also, why the Christian is to pray always, as well as to agonise and watch. It is not all to be done by his own unaided exertions. In fact, one of his chief exertions should turn upon this very point -- that he pray always, "*watching* thereunto," lest anything draw his heart down from the throne of his Great Helper.

We may also see why Christians are exhorted to separate themselves from the world. They are told they must hang the old man upon the cross. To this there are no exceptions. Whoever would be saved must be crucified -- that is, as to "the old man and his deeds." The crucifixion of Christ is an emblem of this, and serves, therefore, in a measure, to show what this must and should be.

Does any one suppose that the whole intent of Christ's crucifixion is to meet the demands of the violated law? Not so; but it was also to be an emblem of the work to be wrought upon and within the Christian's soul. Its old selfish habitudes must be broken up and its powerful tendencies to evil be slain.

Mark, also, why Christians are exhorted to spend the time of their sojourning here in fear, and to walk softly and carefully, as before God, through all the meanderings of their pilgrimage; in all holy conversation -- so reads his book of counsel -- being steadfast, immovable, always abounding in work -- the work, too, of the Lord, as knowing that so his labour will not be in vain in the Lord. Every weight must he lay aside; must not encumber himself with many cares; must not overload himself with gold, nor even with care and effort to get it; must be watchful most diligently on this side and on that, remembering, for both his quickening and his comfort, that Christ, too, with his holy angels, watches evermore over him, saying, I am determined to save you if I can, but I cannot unless I can first gain and then retain your attention, and then rouse up your hearts to the utmost diligence, coupled with the most simple-hearted faith. Oh, what a conflict there must be to rescue each saved sinner from the jaws of Satan and from the thraldom of his own lusts, and finally bring him home, washed and holy, to his home in the heavens! No wonder the Bible should speak of the Christian as being saved only through much difficulty.

Again, sinners, if they will only exercise a little common sense and philosophy, can readily account for the faults of Christians. See that husband with a pious

wife. He treats her badly, and day after day annoys her by his ill-temper and little abuses. The children, too, trouble her, and all the more for the example her husband sets before them. Now he may very likely, in some of his moods of mind and temper, drop some reflections upon her piety, and upon the gospel she professes; but in his more rational moments he will be compelled to say, "No wonder my wife has these faults: I have never helped her at all; I have only hindered her in all her Christian course, and I know I have been a continual source of vexation and irritation to her. No wonder she has had faults. I am ashamed that I have done so much to create and multiply them, and so very little ever in any way to improve her character."

When candid men come to consider all these things, the human constitution, the tendency to unbelief, the impulses towards self-indulgence, and the strength of temptation, they cannot but see that there is abundant occasion for all those faults in Christian character and conduct which they are wont to criticise so stringently. Yet often, perhaps commonly, wicked men make no allowance for the faults of Christians, but assume that every Christian ought to be spotless, while every sinner may make so much apology for his sin as quite to shield his conscience from conviction of guilt. Nothing, therefore, is more common than for impenitent men to triumph, devil-like, over any instance of stumbling in a professed Christian. Why don't they rather sympathise with their difficulties and their great work -- as real philanthropists? That brother who has a Christian sister does not help her at all, but, on the contrary, tries to ensnare her into sin. He should rather say, "I will not be a stumbling block to my sister. If I cannot directly help her on in her Christian course, at least I will not hinder her." Let the impenitent husband say, "My dear Christian wife! I know something about her difficulties; God forbid that I should play into the devil's hands, and try to help the devil on in his devilish work." Sinner, why don't you abstain from ensnaring your Christian friend? There is One above who cares for him, who patiently toils for his salvation, and watches day and night over his progress, and who is pledged to save him at last. And can you hope to gain the favour of that Holy and just Being by trying to ensnare and offend any of his little ones?

VIII. THE SALVATION OF SINNERS IMPOSSIBLE.

"If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" -- 1 Peter 4:18.

I SAID in a former sermon, that the doctrine of the text is that the salvation of the righteous is difficult and that of the sinner impossible. In that sermon I discussed at length the first part of this subject, showing how and why the salvation of the righteous is difficult. I am now to take up the remaining part and show how and *why the salvation of the wicked is impossible*.

Here let me premise in general that by the righteous is not meant those who have never sinned. It could not be difficult to save such as had not sinned against God. They are, in fact, already saved. But these righteous ones are those, who, having been sinners, now come to exercise faith in Christ, and of course become "heirs of that righteousness which is by faith." Vitally important to be considered here is the fact that the governmental difficulty in the way of being saved, growing out of your having sinned, even greatly, is all removed by Christ's atonement. No matter now how great your guilt, if you will only have faith in Jesus, and accept of his atonement as the ground of pardon for your sins.

Hence the difficulty in the way of saving sinners is not simply that they have sinned, but that they will not now cease from sinning and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The salvation of sinners is therefore impossible.

1. Because it is impossible for God by any means he can wisely employ, to persuade them to desist from sinning. They are so wicked and so perverse that they abuse to greater sin the very best means God employs to bring them to repentance. Hence God cannot wisely save them.

When I say it is *impossible* for God to convert them, I do not imply that God lacks *physical* power to do anything which is the proper subject of such power. On this point there can be no question. But how can physical omnipotence be brought to bear directly upon mind and upon the heart?

Again, let us consider, that it may not be wise for God to bring all the moral power of his universe to bear upon the sinner in this world. If this were wise and

practicable, it might avail -- for aught we can know; but since he does not do it, we infer that he refrains for some wise reason.

Certain limitations are fixed in the divine wisdom to the amount of moral influence which God shall employ in the case of a sinner. It is in view of this fact that I say, God finds it impossible to gain the sinner's consent to the gospel by any means that he can wisely employ. He goes as far as is really wise and as far as is on the whole good. This is undoubtedly the fact in the case. Yet all this does not avail. Hence it becomes impossible that the sinner should be saved.

2. Again, the sinner cannot be saved, because salvation *from sin* is an indispensable condition of salvation *from hell*. The being saved from sin must come first in order. Every sinner knows, and on reflection and self-inspection he must see, that his state of mind is such that he cannot respect himself. The elements of blessedness are not therefore in him, and cannot be until he meets the demands of his own moral nature.

He knows, also, that he does not want to have anything to do with God -- is afraid of God -- both dreads and hates his presence -- is afraid to die and go so near to God as death bears all men. He knows that all his relations to God are unpleasant in the extreme. How certainly, then, may he know that he is utterly unprepared for heaven.

Now the sinner must be saved from this guilty and abominable state of mind. No change is needed in God -- neither in his character, government, or position towards sin; but the utmost possible change and all the needed change is requisite on the part of the sinner. If salvation implies fitness for heaven, and if this implies ceasing from sin, then, of course, it is naturally and for ever impossible that any sinner can be saved without holiness.

3. The peace of heaven forbids that you should go there in your sins. I know you think of going to heaven; you rather expect you shall go there at last; your parents are there, as you hope and believe, and for this reason you the more want to go, that you may behold them in their glory. Oh, say you, should I not like to be where my father and mother are? And do you think you can follow them, *in your sins?* What could you do in heaven if you were there? What could you say? What kind of songs could you sing there? What sort of happiness, congenial to your heart, could you hope to find there?

Your pious mother in heaven -- oh, how changed -- you heard her last words on earth for they were words of prayer for your poor guilty soul; but now she shines and sings above, all holy and pure. What sympathy could there be between you and her in heaven? Remember what Christ said when some one told him that his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to see him. "Who," said he, "*is my* mother? and who are my brethren? He that doeth the will of my Father, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." The law of sympathy, therefore, in heaven turns not on earthly relationship, but on oneness of heart -- on the common and mutual spirit of love and obedience towards their great common Father.

Do you then expect that your mother would be glad to see you -- that she would spread her mantle over you and take you up to heaven? Oh, if she were told that you were at the gate, she would hasten down to say, O my sinning child! you cannot enter heaven. Into this holy place nothing can by any means enter that "worketh abomination or maketh a lie." You cannot -- no, you cannot come!

If it were left to your own mother to decide the question of your admission, you could not come in. She would not open heaven's gate for your admission. She knows you would disturb the bliss of heaven. She knows you would mar its purity and be an element of discord in its sympathies and in its songs.

You know it need not have been so. You might have given your heart to God in season, and then he would have shed his love abroad in your soul, and given you the Holy Ghost, and made you ripe for heaven. But you *would not*. All was done for you that God could wisely do; all that Christ could do; all that the spirit of God could consistently do. But all was vain: all came to naught and availed nothing, because you *would not* forego your sins -- would not renounce them, even for everlasting life. And now will heaven let you in? No. Nothing that worketh abomination can by any means go in there.

4. Besides, it would not be for your own comfort to be there. You were never quite comfortable in spiritual society on earth; in the prayer-meeting you were unhappy. As one individual said here: "Oh, what a place this is! I cannot go across the street without being spoken to about my soul. How can I live here?"

Let me tell you, it will be just as bad, nay, much worse, for you in heaven. That can be no place for you, sinner, since you hate, worst of all things on earth, those places and scenes which are most like heaven.

5. The justice of God will not allow you to participate in the joys of the saints. His relations to the universe make it indispensable that he should protect his saints from such society as you. They have had their discipline of trial in such society long enough: the scenes of their eternal reward will bring everlasting relief from this torture of their holy sympathies. Oh, how will God, their Infinite Father, throw around them the shield of his protection upon the mountains of paradise, that lift their heads eternally under the sunlight of his glory!

His sense of propriety forbids that he should give you a place among his pure and trustful children. It would be so unfitting -- so unsuitable! It would throw such discord into the sweet songs and sympathies of the holy!

Besides, as already hinted, it could be no kindness to you. It could not soothe, but only chafe and fret your spirit. Oh, if you were obliged to be there, how would it torment and irritate your soul!

If, then, the sinner cannot be saved and go to heaven, *where* shall he *appear?*

The question is a strong negation. They shall not appear among the righteous and the saved. This is a common form of speaking. Nehemiah said, "Shall such a man as I *flee?*" No, indeed. This form of question is one of the strongest forms of negation that can be expressed in our language.

Where, then, shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? In no desirable place or position certainly. Not with the righteous in the judgment, for so God's word has often and most solemnly affirmed. Christ himself affirms that, when all nations shall be gathered before him for judgment, he will separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. This separation, as the description shows, brings the righteous on the right hand and the wicked on the left. And it should be considered that this statement is made by Christ himself, and that if any being in the universe knows, it must be he to whom is "given authority to execute judgment." He says he will separate them one from another according not to their national relations, or their family connections, but according to their character as friends or enemies to God.

Oh, what a separation must this be in families and among dear earthly friends! On this side will be a husband -- on that a wife; here a brother and there a sister; here one of two friends and there the other -- parted for *ever* -- *for ever!* If this great division were to be struck between you today according to present

character, how fearful the line of separation it would draw! Ask yourselves where it would pass through your own families and among the friends you love. How would it divide College classes -- and oh, how would it smite many hearts with terror and consternation!

It is asked, where shall the ungodly appear? *I answer, certainly not in heaven*, nor on the heavenly side. But they must be in the judgment, for God has said, he would bring all the race into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. All are to be there, but some are on the right hand and some on the left.

The ungodly and the sinner will appear in that day among the damned -- among lost angels, doomed to the place prepared of old for their eternal abode. So Jesus has himself told us. The very words of their sentence are on record: "Then will he say to them on his left hand, Depart, from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." This is indeed the only place for which they are prepared; and this the only society to which their hearts are congenial. They have of choice belonged to Satan's government on earth: at least, in the sense of doing precisely what he would have them do. Now, therefore, after such a training in selfishness and sin, they are manifestly fit for no other and better society than that of Satan and his angels.

Let it not surprise any of you to be told that the amiable sinners of earth are preparing themselves -- (remaining enemies to God and radically selfish) -- for the society of the arch spirit of evil. Just observe what restraints are thrown around sinners here. Mark how obviously they *feel* restrained, and show that they are restive and ill at ease. It may be read out of their very hearts that they would be glad to be vastly more wicked and selfish, that is, in their external life -- if they might. It is wonderful to see in how many ways God's providence has walled around the sinner's pathway and hedged him in from outbreaking sin.

But let these walls be torn away; let all regard to his reputation among the good perish for ever from his soul; let despair of ever gaining God's favour take full possession of his heart, and rivet its iron grasp upon him, then what will he become? Take away all the restraints of civil society -- of laws and customs -- of Christian example, and of Christian society; let there be no more prayer made for him by pitying Christian friends, no more counsel given, or entreaty used to persuade him towards the good, then tell me, where is the sinner? How terribly will sin work out its dreadful power to corrupt and madden the soul! Bring

together myriads of desperate wretches, in the madness of their despair and rage and wrath against God and all the good, and Oh what a fearful world would they make! What can be conceived more awful! Yet this is the very world for which sinners are now preparing, and the only one for which they will be found in the judgment to be prepared.

As this is the only world for which the sinner is prepared, so is it the only one which is appropriate and fitting, the case being viewed in respect to his influence for mischief. Here only, here in this prison-house of woe and despair, can sinners be effectually prevented from doing any further mischief in God's kingdom. Here they are cut off from all possibility of doing any more harm in God's universe.

In this earthly state one sinner destroys much good each and every sinner does much evil. God looks on, not unconcerned, but with amazing patience. He suffers a great deal of evil to be done, for the sake of securing an opportunity to try the power of forbearance and love upon the sinner's heart. You are abusing his love and defeating all its kind designs, but still God waits, till the point is reached where forbearance ceases to be virtue. Beyond this point, how can God wait longer?

Here you find ample room for doing mischief. Many are around you whom you influence to evil and urge on towards hell. Some of them would be converted but for your influence to hold them back and ensnare their souls. If this were the place, I could name and call out some of you who are exerting a deadly influence upon your associates. Ah, to think of the souls you may ruin for ever! God sees them, and sees how you are playing into the devil's hands to drag them down with you to an eternal hell. But ere long he will take you away from this sphere of doing evil. He will for ever cut off your connection with those who can be influenced to evil, and leave around you only those associates who are ruined, despairing, and maddened in sin, like yourself. There he will lock you up, throw away the key, and let you rave on, and swear on, and curse on, and madden your guilty soul more and more for ever! Oh! what inmates are those in this prison-house of the guilty and the lost! Why should not God fit up *such* a place for *such* beings, so lost to all good, and so given up to all the madness and guilt of rebellion?

There alone can sinners be made useful. They refused to make themselves useful by their voluntary agency on earth; now God will make use of them in hell for

some good. Do you ask me if I talk about sin being made useful? Yes, to be sure I do. God never permits anything to occur in his universe but he extracts some good from it, overruling its influence, or making the correction and punishment of it a means of good. This is a great consolation to the holy, that no sinner can exist from whom God will not bring out some good. This principle is partially developed in society here, under civil government. The gallows is not the greatest evil in the world, nor the most unmixed evil. Murder is much worse. States' prisons are not the greatest earthly evils. Government can make great use of those men who will not obey law. It can make them examples and lift them up as beacons of warning, to show the evil of disobeying wholesome laws. A great many men have had strong and useful impressions made on their minds, as, riding through Auburn on the railroad, they have marked those lofty frowning walls and battlements which enclose and guard the culprits immured within. Many a hard heart has quailed before those walls, and the terrors of those cells behind. If the outside view does not avail to awe the spirit of transgression, give them the inside view and some of its heart-desolating experience. These things do good. They tame the passion for evil-doing, and impress a salutary fear on the hardened and reckless. If so under all the imperfections of human government, how much more under the perfect administration of the divine!

God cannot afford to lose your influence in his universe. He will rejoice to use you for the glory of his mercy, if you will; Oh yes! He will put away your sins far as the East is from the West, and will put a robe of beauty and glory upon you, and a sweet harp in your hands, and a song of praise on your lips, and the melody of heaven's love in your heart, all these, if you will. But if you will not, then he has other attributes besides mercy that need to be illustrated. Justice will come in for its claim, and to illustrate this he will make you an example of the bitter misery of sinning. He will put you deep in hell; and the holy, beholding you there, will see that God's kingdom is safe and pure, and in their everlasting song they will shout, "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thy judgments are made manifest."

This is the only way in which God can make you useful in his kingdom, if you will not repent. He has tried every means of bringing you to repentance, but all in vain; he cannot get your consent. Of course there is no alternative but to make you an example to deter all other moral agents from sinning.

There is no other way for God to meet the demands of the public weal, but to make you an example to show his abhorrence of sin. God is most thoroughly economical of his resources. He husbands everything to the very best account. Everything must, under his hand, be made conducive in some way to the general good. Even of your misery he will be as economical as he can, and will carefully turn it all to the very best account. Every groan and every throb and pang of your agonised soul will be turned to use. Yes, rely upon it; all this agony, which does you no good, but is to you only unmingled and unalleviated woe, will be a warning beacon, under God's hand, crying out in tones of thunder, Stand away! stand away! lest you come into this place of torment; stand afar from sin -- fear this awful sin -- watch against it, for it is an awful thing to sin against Jehovah. I have tried it and here I am in woe unutterable! Oh what a testimony, when all hell shall roll up one mighty accumulated groan! a groan whose awful voice shall be, Stand in awe and sin not, for God is terrible in his judgments upon the guilty.

O sinner, think of it. God wants you now to cry out to every fellow-sinner, and warn him away from the brink of hell. Will you do it? What are you in fact doing? Are you preparing yourself to go out as a missionary of light and love and mercy to the benighted? Are you pluming your wings, as an angel of mercy, to bear the messages of salvation? Oh no! you refuse to do this, or anything of the sort. You disdain to preach such a gospel and to preach it *so!* But God will make you preach it *in another way*; for, as I said, he is thoroughly economical of the resources of his kingdom, and all must do something in some way for his glory. He will have everything preach -- saints preach and sinners preach; yea, sinners in hell must preach for God and for his truth. He will make your very groans and tears -- those "tears that ever fall, but not in Mercy's sight" they will preach, and will tell over and over the dreadful story of mercy abused and sin persisted in, and waxing worse and worse, till the bolts of vengeance broke at last upon your guilty head! Over and over will those groans, and tears repeat the fearful story, so that when the angels shall come from the remotest regions of the universe, they shall cry out, What is here? What mean those groans? What mean those flames, wreathing around their miserable victims? Ah! the story told then will make them cry aloud, Why will God's creatures sin against his throne? Can there be such madness in beings gifted with reason's light?

These angels know that the only thing that can secure public confidence in a ruler is fidelity in the execution of his law. Hence it is to them no wonder that,

there being sin to punish, God should punish it with most exemplary severity. They expect this and seeing its awful demonstrations before their eyes only serves to impress the more deeply on their souls the holiness and justice of the great and blessed God.

REMARKS.

1. From this standpoint we can easily see what we are to understand by the doctrine of election -- a doctrine often misstated, and often perverted to a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. The simple and plain view of it is, that God, foreseeing all the future of your existence as perfectly as if all were in fact present, determined to deal with you according to your voluntary course; determined to offer you the gospel, and, on your refusal of it, to give you over to the doom of those who deny the Lord that bought them. Election is no new or different plan of divine administration, aside from and unlike what the Bible reveals as the plan of saving men through the gospel. It is this very plan of which the Bible is full, only that it contemplates this plan as framed by the divine Mind "before the world began."

2. If you will now consent to give your heart to God, you can be saved. No election will hinder you. The doctrine of election is simply the fact that God sends forth his Spirit to save as many as by the best system of influences he wisely can save; and surely this never can hinder any sinner from repenting and gaining salvation, for the very good reason that this plan contemplates saving and not damning men, as its object, and is in fact the sinner's only hope.

Come then, repent and believe the gospel, if you would be saved. No election will hinder you, and neither will it save you without your own repentance unto life.

How then shall the case turn with you? Almost all who are ever converted are brought in, early in life. Not one in a hundred is converted after the age of forty. The old among the converts are always few -- only one among a host -- one in a long space of time; like scattering beacon lights upon the mountain tops, that the aged may not quite despair of salvation. But God is intensely interested in saving the young, for he needs and loves to use them in his service. Oh how his heart goes forth after the young! How often has my soul been affected as I have thought of his parental interest for the salvation of this great multitude of youth! They come here from pious homes, freighted with the prayers of pious fathers

and mothers, and what shall be the result? What has been the result, as thus far developed, *with you?* Has anything been really secured as yet? Is anything fixed and done for eternity? How many times have you been called to decide, but have decided wrong -- all wrong? You have been pressed earnestly with God's claims, and many a time have prayers and groans gone forth from the Christian heart of this whole community; but ah! where are you still? Not yet safe; ah, in greater peril than ever! Often reproved, hardening your neck; and what next? Suddenly destroyed, and that *without remedy*. Suppose even now the curtain should drop, *you are dead!* And whither, then, goes the undying, guilty soul?

3. How great the mistake made by Universalists, that all men will be saved, when the Bible holds that even the salvation of the righteous is difficult, and that of the sinner, impossible. How strangely they misread the whole Bible! Go not in their ways, O ye youth of Oberlin!

But what are you doing? Do you flatter yourselves that the work of salvation is all so easy that it may be safely and surely done during a few of life's last moments? Will you presume, as the man did who said he should need but five minutes to prepare to die? Hear his story. What was the result of his system? Disease came on. It smote him with its strong hand. Delirium set in. Reason tottered and fell from her throne, and so he died! Go on, thou young man; drive on, headlong and reckless; make a bold business of sinning, and bear it on with bold front and high hand; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Consider what tidings we hear of our former pupils who once sat as you now sit, and once heard the gospel as you may hear it now. There, one is dead; and now another -- and now another. In rapid succession they drop from the stage of mortal life and what next? What more? Soon we shall meet them in the fearful judgment!

Brethren, what will the universe say of us, if we neglect to labour for the salvation of these precious youth? What will the parents of these dear youth say to us when we shall meet them at the Saviour's bar?

I have spoken to you of the difficulties and the struggles of the Christian -- more and greater far than the ungodly are usually aware of; those agonies of prayer, those conflicts against temptation; out of all which it is only great grace that can bring him forth, conqueror and more than conqueror. If he is saved with so much difficulty, how does it become you to *strive* to enter in at the strait gate? Are you aware that the smooth sea of temptation bears you on to the breakers of death?

Were you ever at Niagara? How smooth and deceitful those waters, as they move along quite up above the draft of the suction from below! But lower down, see how those same waters roar, and dash, and foam, and send up their thick mists to the heavens above you. Yet in the upper stream you glide gently and noiselessly along, dreaming of no danger, and making no effort to escape. In a moment you are in the awful current, dashing headlong down; and where are you now?

And what should you do? Like Bunyan's Christian pilgrim, put your fingers in both ears, and run, shouting, Life! life! eternal LIFE! How many of you are sliding along on the smooth, deceitful stream, above, yet only just above, the awful rapids and the dreadful cataract of death! What if, this night, delirium should seize upon you? Or what if the Spirit should leave you for ever, and it should be said of you, "He is joined to his idols, let him alone?"

What do you say? Do I hear you saying, "If salvation is possible for me -- if by putting forth the whole energy of my will I can ensure it, Oh let me do so! Help me, O ye ministers of Christ's gospel! Help me, ye Christians, who pray between the porch and the altar! Help me, O ye heavens, of heavens for this is a thing of life and death, and the redemption of the soul is most precious!"

Surely, O ye sinners, it is time that you should set down your foot in most fixed determination, and say, *"I must and I will have heaven!* How can I ever bear the *doom of the damned!*

IX. ANY ONE FORM OF SIN PERSISTED IN IS FATAL TO THE SOUL.

"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point is guilty of all." -- James 2:10.

"He that is unjust in the least, is also unjust in much." -- Luke 16:10.

In speaking from these words, I inquire,

I. *What is it to persist in sin?*

1. To persist in sin is not to abandon it. If a person should only occasionally, under the force of temptation, fall into a sin, any form of sin, and should repent and abandon it for a time, and should only *occasionally* be overcome by a temptation to commit that form of sin, it would not be proper to say that he *persisted* in it; for, according to this supposition, he is not wilful, or obstinate, or habitual in the commission of this sin, but it is rather *accidental*, in the sense that the temptation *sometimes* overtakes and overcomes him, notwithstanding his habitual abandonment of it and resistance to it. But if the commission be *habitual*, *a* thing *allowed*, a thing indulged in habitually, such a sin is persisted in.

2. A sin is persisted in, although it may not be outwardly repeated, if it be not duly confessed. An individual may be guilty of a great sin, which he may not repeat in the act; nevertheless, while he neglects or refuses to confess it, it is still on his conscience unrepented of and in that sense, is still persisted in. If the sin has been committed to the injury of some person or persons, and be not duly confessed to the parties injured, it is still persisted in.

If any of you had slandered his neighbour to his great injury, it would not do for you to merely abstain *from repeating* that offence. The sin is not abandoned until it is confessed, and reparation made, so far as confession can make it. If not confessed, the injury is allowed to work; and therefore the sin is virtually repeated, and therefore persisted in.

Again, 3. A sin is persisted in when due reparation has not been made. If you have wronged a person, and it is in your power to make him restitution and satisfaction, then, so long as you persist in neglecting or refusing to do so, you do not forsake the sin, but persist in it. Suppose one who had stolen your

property, resolved never to repeat the act, and never to commit the like again; and yet he refuses to make restitution and restore the stolen property as far as is in his power; of course he still persists in that sin, and the wrong is permitted to remain.

I once had a conversation with a young man to this effect. He had been in the habit of stealing. He was connected with a business in which it was possible for him to steal money in small sums, which he had repeatedly done. He afterwards professed to become a Christian, but he made no restitution. He found in the Bible this text, "Let him that stole steal no more." He resolved not to steal any more, and there let the matter rest. Of course he had no evidence of acceptance with God, for he could not have been accepted. However, he flattered himself that he was a Christian for a long time, until he heard a sermon on confession and restitution, which woke him up. He then came to me for the conversation of which I have spoken.

He was told that, if it was in his power, he must make restitution and give back the stolen money, or he could not be forgiven. But observe his perversion of Scripture. To be sure it is the duty of those who have stolen property to steal no more; but this is not all. He is bound to restore that which he has stolen, as well as to steal no more. This is a plain doctrine of Scripture, as well as of reason and conscience.

II. *Any one form of sin persisted in is fatal to the soul.*

I now come to the main doctrine of our texts -- That is, it is impossible for a person to be saved who continues to commit any form of known sin.

1. It is fatal to the soul because any one form of sin persisted in is a violation of the spirit of the whole law. The text in James settles that: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." The law requires supreme love to God, and equal love to our fellowmen.

Now sin is selfishness; and always assumes the preference of self-interest and self-gratification to obedience to God, or to our duty to our fellowmen.

Whosoever, therefore, habitually prefers himself to God, or is selfish in regard to his fellowmen, cannot be a Christian. If in any one thing he violates the law of love, he breaks the spirit of the whole law, and is living in sin.

2. Persistence in any form of sin cannot consist with supreme love to God or equal love to our fellowmen. If we love God more than ourselves, we cannot disoblige him for the sake of obliging ourselves. We cannot displease him, knowingly and habitually, for the sake of pleasing ourselves.

For we supremely love whom we supremely desire to please. If we supremely desire to please ourselves, we love ourselves supremely. If we love God supremely, we desire supremely to please him; and cannot, consistently with the existence of this love in the soul, consent to displease him.

Under the force of a powerful temptation that diverts and partially distracts the mind, one who loves God may be induced to commit an *occasional* sin, and *occasionally* to displease God.

But if he love God supremely, he will consent to displease him only under the pressure of a present and powerful temptation that diverts attention and partially distracts the mind. So that his sin cannot be *habitual;* and no form of sin can habitually have dominion over him if he is truly a Christian.

3. The text in James affirms the impossibility of real obedience in one thing, and of persistent disobedience in another, at the same time. It seems to me a great and common error to suppose that persons can really obey God in the spirit of obedience in *some* things, while at the same time there are certain other things in which they withhold obedience; in other words, that they can obey one commandment and disobey another at the same time -- that they can perform one duty acceptably, and at the same time refuse to perform other duties.

Now the text in James is designed flatly to contradict this view of the subject. It asserts as plainly as possible, that disobedience in any one point is wholly inconsistent with true obedience, for the time being, in any other respect; that the neglect of one duty renders it impossible, for the time being, to perform any other duty with acceptance; in other words, no one can obey in one thing and disobey in another at the same time.

But 4. Real obedience to God involves and implies supreme regard for his authority.

Now if any one has a supreme regard for God's authority in any one thing, he will yield to his authority in everything.

But if he can consent to act against the authority of God in any one thing for the time being, he cannot be accepted in anything; for it must be that, while in one thing he rejects the authority of God, he does not properly accept it in any other. Hence, if obedience to God be real in *anything*, it extends for the time being, and *must* extend, to *everything known to be the will of God*.

Again, 5. One sin persisted in is fatal to the soul, because it is a real rejection of God's *whole* authority. If a man violates knowingly any one of God's commandments as such, he rejects the authority of God; and if in this he rejects the authority of God, he rejects *his whole* authority, for the time being, on every subject. So that if he *appears* to obey in other things while in one thing he sets aside and condemns God's authority, it is only the *appearance* of obedience, and not *real* obedience. He acts from a *wrong motive in* the case in which he appears to obey. He certainly does not act out of supreme respect to God's authority; and therefore he does not truly obey him. But surely one who rejects the whole authority of God cannot be saved.

I fear it is very common for persons to make a fatal mistake here; and really to suppose that they are accepted in their obedience in general, although in some things or thing they habitually neglect or refuse to do their duty.

They live, and *know* that they live, in the omission of some duty habitually, or in the violation of their own consciences on some point habitually; and yet they keep up so much of the form of religion, and do so many things that they call duties, that they seem to think that these will compensate for the sin in which they persist. Or rather, so many duties are performed, and so much of religion is kept up, as will show, they think, that upon the whole they are Christians; will afford them ground for hope, and give them reasons to think that they are accepted while they are indulging, *and know* that they are, in some known sin.

They say, To be sure, I know that I neglect that duty; I know that I violate my conscience in that thing; but I do so many other things that are my duty, that I have good reason to believe that I am a Christian.

Now this is a fatal delusion. Such persons are totally deceived in supposing that they really obey God in anything. "He that is unjust in the least, is really unjust also in much;" and "whosoever will keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all."

Again, 6. Any form of sin persisted in is fatal to the soul, because it is inconsistent with true repentance. Sin, however great, will be forgiven if repented of. But what *is* repentance? Repentance is not mere sorrow for sin, but it is the heart-renunciation of sin; it is the giving up of sin from the heart, and of all sin as sin; it is the rejection of it because it is that abominable thing which God hates; it is the turning of the heart from self-seeking to supreme love to God and equal love to our fellowmen; it is *heart-reformation*; it is heart-rejection of sin; it is *heart-turning* to God. Now, while any one sin is persisted in and not given up, there can be no true repentance; for, after all, this form of sin is preferred to the will of God -- the indulgence of self in this particular is preferred to pleasing God. There can, therefore, be no true repentance unless all known sin be for the time utterly abandoned.

7. Persistence in any form of sin is fatal to the soul, because it is utterly inconsistent with *saving faith*. That faith is saving which actually *does* save from sin and no other faith is saving or *can* be -- that faith is *justifying* which is *sanctifying*. True faith works by love; it purifies the heart; it overcomes the world.

These are expressly affirmed to be the characteristics of saving faith. Let no one suppose that his faith is justifying, when, in fact, it does not save him from the commission of sin; for he cannot be justified while he persists in the commission of any known sin. If his faith does not purify his heart, if it does not overcome the world and overcome his sins, it can never save him.

Again, 8. Persistence in any one form of sin is fatal to the soul, because it withstands the power of the gospel. The gospel does not save whom it does not sanctify. If sin in any form withstands the saving power of the gospel; if sin does not yield under the influence of the gospel; if it be persisted in, in spite of all the power of the gospel on the soul; of course the gospel does not, *cannot*, save that soul. Such sin is fatal.

But again, 9. Persistence in any one form of sin is fatal to the soul, because the grace of the gospel cannot pardon what it cannot eradicate.

As I have already said, a sin cannot be pardoned while it is persisted in. Some persons seem to suppose that, although they persist in many forms of sin, yet the grace of God will pardon sins that it has not power to eradicate and subdue. But this is a great mistake. The Bible everywhere expressly teaches this -- that if the

gospel fails to eradicate sin, it can never save the soul from the consequences of that sin.

But again, 10. If the gospel should pardon sin which it did not eradicate, this would not save the soul.

Suppose God should not punish sin; still, if the soul be left to the self-condemnation of sin, its salvation is naturally impossible. It were of no use to the sinner to be pardoned, if left under this self-condemnation. This is plain. Let no one, therefore, think that, if his sins are not subdued by the grace of the gospel, he can be saved.

But again, 11, and lastly. Sin is a *unit* in its *spirit and root*. It consists in preferring self to God.

Hence, if any form of preferring self to God be persisted in, no sin has been truly abandoned; God is not supremely loved; and the soul cannot, by any possibility, in such a case, be saved.

REMARKS.

1. What a *delusion* the self-righteous are under.

Every man is aware that he has sinned at some time, and that he is a sinner. But there are many who think that, upon the whole, they perform so many good deeds, that they are safe. They are aware that they are habitually neglecting God and neglecting duty, that they neither love God supremely nor their neighbour as themselves; yet they are constantly prone to give themselves credit for a great deal of goodness. Now let them understand that there is no particle of righteousness in them, nor of true goodness, while they live in neglect of any known duty to man -- while they are constantly prone to give themselves credit for a great deal of goodness. But they seem to think that they have a balance of good deeds.

2. How many persons indulge in little sins, as they call them; but they are too *honest*, they think, to indulge in great crimes. Now both these texts contradict this view. "He that is unjust in that which is least, is unjust also in much." If a man yields to a slight temptation to commit what he calls a small sin, it cannot be a regard for God that keeps him from committing great sins. He may abstain from committing great sins through fear of disgrace or of punishment, but not

because he loves God. If he does not love God well enough to keep from yielding to slight temptations to commit small sins, surely he does not love him well enough to keep from yielding to great temptations to commit great sins.

Again, 3. We see the delusion of those who are guilty of habitual dishonesties, tricks of trade for example, and yet profess to be Christians.

How many are there who are continually allowing themselves to practise little dishonesties, little deceptions, and to tell little lies in trade; and yet think themselves Christians! Now this delusion is awful; it is fatal. Let all such be on their guard, and understand it.

But again, 4. We see the delusion of those professors of religion who allow themselves habitually to neglect some known duty, and yet think themselves Christians. They shun some cross; there is something that they know they ought to do which they do not, and this is habitual with them. Perhaps all their Christian lives they have shunned some cross, or neglected the performance of some duty, and yet they think themselves Christians. Now let them know assuredly that they are *self-deceived*.

5. Many, I am sorry to say, preach a gospel that is a dishonour to Christ. They really maintain, at least they make this impression, though they may not teach it in words and form, that Christ really justifies men while they are living in the habitual indulgence of known sin.

Many preachers seem not to be aware of the impression which they really leave upon their people. Probably, if they were asked whether they hold and preach that any sin is forgiven which is not repented of; whether men are really justified while they persist in known sin, they would say, No. But, after all, in their preaching, they leave a very different impression. For example, how common it is to find ministers who are in this position: You ask them how many members they have in their church. Perhaps they will tell you, Five hundred. How many, do you think, are living up to the best light which they have? How many of them are living from day to day with a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man, and are not indulging in any known sin either of omission or commission? who are living and aiming to discharge punctually and fully every duty of heart to God and to all their fellowmen? Push the inquiry, and ask, How many of your church can you honestly say, before God, you think are endeavouring to live without sin? who do not indulge themselves in any form of

transgression or omission?

They will tell you, perhaps, that they do not know a member of their church, or at least they know but very few, of whom they can say this. Now ask them further, How many of your church do you suppose to be in a state of justification? and you will find that they have the impression that the great mass of their church are in a state of justification with God; in a state of acceptance with him; in a state in which they are prepared to die; and if they should die just in this state by any sudden stroke of Providence, and they should be called upon to preach their funeral sermon, they would assume that they had gone to heaven.

While they will tell you that they know of but very few of their church of whom they can conscientiously say, I do not believe he indulges himself in any known sin; yet, let one of that great majority, of whom he cannot say this, suddenly die, and this pastor be called to attend his funeral, would he not comfort the mourners by holding out the conviction that he was a Christian, and had gone to heaven? Now this shows that the pastor himself, whatever be his theoretical views of being justified while indulging in any known sin, is yet, after all, practically an antinomian; and practically holds, believes, and teaches that Christ justifies people while they are living in the neglect of known duty, while they are knowingly shunning some cross, while they persist in known sin. Ministers, indeed, often leave this impression upon their churches (and I fear *Calvinistic* ministers quite generally), that if they are converted, or ever *were,* they are justified, although they may be living habitually and always in the indulgence of more or less known sin, living in the habitual neglect of known duty, indulging various forms of selfishness. And yet they are regarded as justified Christians: and get the impression, even from the preaching of their ministers, that all is well with them; that they really believe the gospel and are saved by Christ.

Now this is really antinomianism. It is a faith without law; it is a Saviour that saves in *and not from sin*. It is presenting Christ as really setting aside the moral law and introducing another rule of life; as forgiving sin while it is persisted in, instead of saving *from* sin.

6. Many profess to be Christians, and are indulging the hope of eternal life, who know that they never have forsaken all forms of sin; that in some things they have always fallen short of complying with the demands of their own consciences. They have indulged in what they call *little* sins; they have allowed themselves in practices, and in forms of self-indulgence, that they cannot justify;

they have never reformed all their bad habits, and have never lived up to what they have regarded as their whole duty. They have never really *intended* to do this; have never resolutely set themselves in the strength of Christ, to give up every form of sin, both of omission and commission; but, on the contrary, they know that they have always indulged themselves in what they condemn. And yet they call themselves Christian! But this is as contrary to the teaching of the Bible as possible. The Bible teaches, not only that men are condemned by God if they indulge themselves in what they condemn; but, also, that God condemns them if they indulge in that the lawfulness of which they so much as *doubt*. If they indulge in any one thing the lawfulness of which is in their own estimation doubtful, God condemns them. This is the express teaching of the Bible. But how different is this from the common ideas that many professors of religion have!

7. Especially is this true of those who habitually indulge in the neglect of known duties, and who habitually shun the cross of Christ. Many persons neglect family prayer, and yet admit that they ought to perform it. How many females will even stay away from the female prayer-meeting to avoid performing the duty of taking a part in those meetings! How many indulge the hope that they are saved, while they know that they are neglecting, and always *have* neglected, some things, and even *many* things, that they admit to be their duty. They continue to live on in those omissions; but they think they are Christians because they do not engage in anything that is openly disgraceful, or, as they suppose, very bad.

Now there are many that entirely overlook the real nature of sin. The law of God is *positive*. It commands us to consecrate all our powers to his service and glory; to love him with all our heart and our neighbour as ourself. Now to neglect to do this is sin; it is positive transgression; it is an omission which always involves a *refusal* to do what God requires us to do. In other words, sin is the *refusal* to do what God requires us to do. It is the neglect to fulfil our obligations. If one neglects to pay you what he owes you, do you not call that sin, especially if the neglect involves necessarily the refusal to pay when he has the means of payment?

Sin really consists in withholding from God and man that love and service which we owe them -- a withholding from God and man their due.

Now, where any one withholds from God and man what is their due, is this honest? is this Christian? And while this withholding is persisted in, can an

individual be in a *justified* state? No, indeed!

The Bible teaches that sin is forgiven when it is repented of, but never while it is persisted in. The Bible teaches that the grace of God can save us from *sin* -- from the *commission* of sin, or can pardon when we repent and put away sin; but it never teaches that sin can be forgiven while it is persisted in.

Let me ask you who are here present, Do you think you are Christians? Do you think, if you should die in your present state, that you are prepared to go to heaven? that you are already justified in Christ?

Well now, let me further ask, Are you so much as seriously and solemnly *intending* to perform to Christ, from day to day, your whole duty, and to omit nothing that you regard as your duty either to God or man? Are you not habitually shunning some cross? *omitting* something because it is a trial to perform that duty? Are you not avoiding the performance of *disagreeable* duties, and things that are trying to flesh and blood? Are you not neglecting the souls of those around you? Are you not failing to love your neighbour as yourself? Are you not neglecting something that you yourself confess to be your duty? and is not this *habitual* with you?

And now, do you suppose that you are really to be saved while guilty of these neglects habitually and persistently? I beg of you, be not deceived.

8. The impression of many seems to be, that grace *will* pardon what it cannot *prevent*; in other words, that if the grace of the gospel fails to save people from *the commission* of sin in this life, it will nevertheless pardon them and save them *in* sin, if it cannot save *from sin*.

Now, really, I understand the gospel as teaching that men are saved *from sin first*, and, as a consequence, from hell; and not that they are saved from hell while they are not saved from sin. Christ sanctifies when he saves. And this is the very first element or idea of salvation, saving *from* sin. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," said the angel, "for he shall save his people *from their sins*." "Having raised up his Son Jesus," said the apostle, "he hath sent him to bless you in turning every one of you from his iniquities."

Let no one expect to be saved from hell, unless the grace of the gospel saves him first from sin.

Again, 9. There are many who think that they *truly obey* God in *most* things, while they know that they habitually *disobey* Him in *some things*. They seem to suppose that they render acceptable obedience to *most* of the commandments of God, while they are aware that *some* of the commandments they habitually disregard. Now the texts upon which I am speaking expressly deny this position, and plainly teach that if in any one thing obedience is refused, if any one commandment is disobeyed, no other commandment is acceptably obeyed, or can be for the time being.

Do let me ask you who are here present, Is not this impression in your minds that, upon the whole, you have evidence that you are Christians?

You perform so many duties and avoid so many outbreaking sins; you think that there is so great a balance in your favour, that you obey so many more commands than you disobey, that you call yourselves Christians, although you are aware that some of the commandments you never seriously *intended* to comply with, and that in some things you have always allowed yourself to fall short of known duty. Now, if this impression is in your minds, remember that it is not authorised at all by the texts upon which I am speaking, nor by any part of the Bible. You are really disobeying the spirit of the whole law. You do not truly embrace the gospel; your faith does not purify your heart and overcome the world; it does not work by love, and therefore it is a *spurious* faith, and you are yet in your sins. Will you consider this? Will you take home this truth to your inmost soul?

10. There are many who are deceiving themselves by indulging the belief that they are forgiven, while they have not made that confession and restitution which is demanded by the gospel. In other words, they have not truly repented; they have not given up their sin. They do not outwardly *repeat* it; neither do they in heart forsake it.

They have not made restitution; and therefore they hold on to their sin, supposing all is right if they do not repeat it; that Christ will forgive them while they make no satisfaction, even while satisfaction is in their power. This is a great delusion, and is greatly dishonouring to Christ. As if Christ would disgrace himself by forgiving you while you persist in doing your neighbour wrong!

This he cannot do; this he will not, must not do. He loves your neighbour as really as he loves you. He is infinitely willing to forgive provided you repent and

make the restitution in your power; but until then, he cannot, will not.

I must remark again, 11. That from the teachings of these texts it is evident that no one truly *obeys in any one thing*, while he allows himself to *disobey in any other* thing. To obey God truly in anything, we must settle the question of universal obedience; else all our pretended obedience is vain. If we do not yield the *whole* to God; if we do not go the whole length of seriously giving up all, and renouncing in heart *every form* of sin, and make up our minds to obey him in *everything*, we do not truly obey him in anything.

Again, 12. From this subject we can see why there are so many professors of religion that get no peace, and have no evidence of their acceptance. They are full of doubts and fears. They have no religious enjoyment, but are groping on in darkness and doubt; are perhaps praying for evidence and trying to get peace of mind, but fall utterly short of doing so.

Now, in such cases you will often find that some known sin is indulged; some known duty continually neglected; some known cross shunned; something avoided which they know to be their duty, because it is trying to them to fulfil their obligation. It is amazing to see to what an extent this is true.

Some time since, an aged gentleman visited me, who came from a distance as an inquirer. He had been a preacher, and indeed was then a minister of the gospel; but he had given up preaching because of the many doubts that he had of his acceptance with Christ. He was in great darkness and trouble of mind; had been seeking religion, as he said, a great part of his life; and had done everything, as he supposed, in his power, to obtain evidence of his acceptance.

When I came to converse with him, I found that there were sins on his conscience that had been there for many years; plain cases of known transgression, of known neglect of duty indulged all this while. Here he was, striving to get peace, striving to get evidence, and even abandoning preaching because he could not get evidence; while all the time these sins lay upon his conscience. Amazing! amazing!

Again, 13. I remark, That total abstinence from all known sin is the only practicable rule of life. To sin in one thing and obey in another at the same time is utterly impossible. We must give up, in heart and purpose, all sin, or we in reality give up *none*. It is utterly impossible for a man to be truly religious *at all*,

unless in the purpose of his heart he is *wholly so and universally so*. He cannot be a Christian at home and a sinner abroad; or a sinner at home and a Christian abroad.

He cannot be a Christian on the Sabbath, and a selfish man in his business or during the week. A man must be one or the other; he must yield *everything* to God, or in fact he yields *nothing* to God.

He cannot serve God and mammon. Many are trying to do so, but it is impossible. They cannot love both God and the world; they cannot serve two masters; they cannot please God and the world. It is the greatest, and yet the most common, I fear, of all mistakes, that men can be truly but knowingly only *partially* religious; that in some things, they can truly yield to God, while in other things they refuse to obey him. How common is this mistake! If it is not, what shall we make of the state of the churches?

How are we to understand the great mass of professors? How are we to understand the great body of religious teachers, if they do not leave the impression, after all, on the churches, that they can be accepted of God while their habitual obedience is only very partial; while, in fact, they pick and choose among the commandments of God, professing to obey some, while they allow themselves in known disobedience of others. Now, if in this respect the church has not a false standard; if the mass of religious instruction is not making a false impression on the churches and on the world in this respect, I am mistaken. I am sorry to be obliged to entertain this opinion, and to express it; but what else can I think? How else can the state of the churches be accounted for? How else is it that ministers hope that the great mass of their churches are in a safe state? How else is it that the great mass of professors of religion can have any hope of eternal life in them, if this is not the principle practically adopted by them, that they are justified while only rendering habitually but a very partial obedience to God; that they are really forgiven and justified while they only pick and choose among the commandments, obeying those which it costs them little to obey, and are not disagreeable and not unpopular; while they do not hesitate habitually to disobey where obedience would subject them to any inconvenience, require self-denial, or expose them to any persecution?

Again, 14. From what has been said, it will be seen that *partial reformation* is no evidence of *real conversion*. Many are deceiving themselves on this point. Now we should never allow ourselves to believe that a person is converted if we

perceive that his reformation extends to certain things only, while in certain other things he is not reformed; especially when, in the case of those things in which he is not reformed, he admits that he ought to perform those duties, or to relinquish those practices. If we find him still persisting in what he himself admits to be wrong, we are bound to assume and take it for granted that his conversion is not real.

Again, 15. Inquirers can see what they must do.

They must abandon all sin; they must give up *all* for Christ: they must turn with their whole heart and soul to him; and must make up their minds to yield a full and hearty obedience as long as they live. They must settle this in their minds; and must cast themselves upon Christ for forgiveness for all the past, and grace to help in every time of need for the future. Only let it be settled in your mind fully that you will submit yourself to the whole will of God; and then you may expect, and are bound to expect, him to forgive all the past, however great your sins may have been.

You can see, Inquirer, why you have not already obtained peace. You have prayed for pardon; you have prayed for peace; you have endeavoured to get peace, while, in fact, you have not given up all; you have kept something back. It is a perfectly common thing to find that the inquirer has not given up all. And if you do not find peace, it is because you have not given up all.

Some idol is still retained; some sin persisted in -- perhaps some neglect -- perhaps some confession is not made that ought to have been made, or some act of restitution. You have not renounced the world, and do not, in fact, renounce it, and renounce everything, and flee to Christ.

X. THE WRATH OF GOD AGAINST THOSE WHO WITHSTAND HIS TRUTH.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." -- Romans i. 18.

THE following context shows that in these words the apostle has his eye especially on those who, not having a written revelation from God, might yet know him in his works of nature. Paul's view is that God's invisible attributes become apparent to the human mind, ever since the creation of our world -- being revealed by the things he has made. In and by means of these works, we may learn his eternal power and his real divinity. Hence all men have some means of knowing the great truths that pertain to God, our infinite Creator. And hence God may, with the utmost propriety, hold men responsible for accepting this truth reverently, and rendering to their Creator the homage due. For withholding this, they are utterly without excuse.

In discussing the subject presented in our text, let us inquire, first --

I. *What is the true idea of unrighteousness?*

Beyond question, it cannot be less than the negation of righteousness, and may imply more or less of positive wickedness. Here the question will arise, *What* is righteousness? To which I answer, rightness -- *moral* rightness, the original term being used in regard to material things, to denote what is straight; as, for example, a straight line. Unrighteousness, the opposite of this, must mean what is morally crooked, distorted -- not in harmony with the rightness of God's law. To denote *sin*, the Scriptures employ some terms which properly signify a negation, or utter absence of what should be. Some theologians have maintained that the true idea of sin is simply *negative, supposing* sin to consist in *not* doing and *not* being what one ought to do and to be. This idea is strongly implied in our text. Sin is, indeed, a neglect to do known duty and a refusal to comply with known obligation. Inasmuch as love is required always and of all men, this must be a state of real disobedience. Suffice it, then, to say, that unrighteousness is an omission -- a known omission -- a refusal to *be* what we should, and to *do* what we should. Of course it is only and wholly voluntary. The mind's refusal to obey God is a matter of its own free choice.

II. *What is implied in "holding the truth in unrighteousness?"*

The meaning of the original term "hold" is to hold back, to restrain. The idea here is that the man restrains the legitimate influence of the truth, and will not let it have its proper sway over his will.

The human mind is so constituted that truth is its natural stimulus. This stimulus of truth would, if not restrained and held back, lead the mind naturally to obey God. The man holds back the truth through his own unrighteousness, when, for selfish reasons, he overrules and restrains its natural influence, and will not suffer it to take possession and hold sway over his mind.

III. *What is intended by "the wrath of God revealed from heaven?" and Why is it thus revealed against all such unrighteousness?*

The obvious sense is that God, manifesting himself from heaven, has revealed his high and just displeasure against all restraining of the truth and withstanding of its influence.

Before I proceed to show why this is, I must be permitted to come very near to some of you whom I see before me this day, and talk to you in great frankness and faithfulness. I do not charge on you that you have been outwardly immoral, but you *have restrained the truth,* you have withstood its influence. You are therefore the very persons against whom the wrath of God is said to be revealed. This is true of every one of you who has not given himself up to the influence of truth. You have restrained that natural influence; therefore, against *you* God has revealed his wrath.

This is a terrible thing. The wrath of a king is terrible; how much more so is the wrath of *God! Ah,* who can stand before him when once he shall arise in his wrath to avenge his truth and his own glorious name!

Why does God's wrath wax hot against this sin? Comprehensively, the reason is this, Withstanding the truth is resisting God's revealed claims of love and obedience, and is therefore the *whole of sin.* All is comprised in it. This is the very essence -- the true idea of sin; it *is deliberate, intelligent, and intentional rebellion against God.* There could be no obligation until your conscience affirms it to yourself. The conscience cannot thus affirm obligation until there is some knowledge of God revealed to the mind; but when this knowledge is revealed, then conscience must and will affirm obligation. Subsequently to this point, the more conscience is developed, the more it unfolds, and the more

strongly it affirms your obligation to obey God. Suppose a person were created asleep. Until he awakes, there could be in his mind no knowledge of God -- not one idea of God, and consequently no sense of obligation to obey him. But as soon as the moral functions of the reason and the conscience create a sense of obligation, then the mind is brought to a decision. It must then either choose to obey or to disobey God. It must elect either to take God's law as its rule of duty or to reject it.

The alternative of rejecting God makes it necessary to hold back the truth and withstand its claims. We might almost say that these processes are substantially identical -- resisting the natural influence of God's truth on the mind, and withstanding the known claims of God. When you know the truth concerning God, the great question being whether or not you will obey it, if your heart says No! you do of course resist the claims of truth. You hold it back through your own unrighteousness.

The very apprehending of moral truth concerning God renders it impossible to be indifferent. Once seeing God's claims you cannot avoid acting upon them one way or the other. Hence to stop there after your duty is made known, and hold your minds aloof from obedience, is being just as wicked as you can be. You disown your whole obligation towards God, and practically say unto him, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Is not this as wicked as you can be, with the light you may have at the time? What more wicked thing could you do?

Let us look at this matter a little farther. Holding back the truth through unrighteousness implies the total rejection of the moral law as a rule of duty. This must be the case, because, when light concerning the meaning of this law comes before the man, he repels it and resists its claims, thus virtually saying, That law is no rule of duty to me. Thus resisting the influence of truth, he practically denies all obligations to God. Truth coming before his mind, he perceives his obligation, but he withholds his mind from its sway.

You may probably have observed that some persons seem to have no sense of any other obligation save that created by human law. Legal obligation can reach them, but not moral. They will not pay an honest debt unless it is in such a shape that the strong hand of the law can take hold of them. Others have no sensibility to any claims save those that minister to their business reputation. Take away their fear of losing this; remove all the inducements to do right, save those that

pertain to moral obligation, and see if they will ever do anything.

Now such men practically reject and deny God's rights altogether, and, equally so, their own obligations to God. Their conduct, put into words, would read, I have some respect for human law and some fear of human penalty; but, for God's law or penalty either, I care nothing!

It is easy to see that to hold back the truth thus is the perfection of wickedness. For suppose a man refrains from sinning, only because of his obligations to human laws. Then he shows that he fears human penalties only, and has no fear of God before his eyes.

Again, this holding the truth in unrighteousness settles all questions as to the moral character. You may know the man with unerring certainty. His position is taken; his course is fixed; as to moral obligation, he cares nothing. The fact perceived, moral obligation does not decide his course at all. He becomes totally dishonest. This settles the question of his character.

Until he reveres God's authority, there is not a particle of moral goodness in him. He does not act with even common honesty. Of course his moral character towards God is formed and is easily known. If he had any moral honesty, the perceived fact of his own moral obligation would influence his mind. But we see it does not at all; he shuts down the gate on all the claims of truth, and will not allow them to sway his will. Hence it must be that his heart is fully committed to wickedness.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all who thus hold back the truth, because this attitude of the will shows that you are reckless of your obligations towards God. It shows that, with you, a moral claim on your heart and conscience goes for nothing. If you restrain the truth from influencing your mind, this very fact proves that *you do not mean to serve God*. Some of you know that you are not doing what you see to be your duty. You are conscious that the presence of known duty does not move you. You have not done one act of obedience to God's claims because they are God's.

Again, not only does this settle the question of moral character -- which is of itself a good reason for God's wrath; but it also settles the question of *moral relations*. Because it shows that your moral character is altogether corrupt and wrong, it also shows that, in regard to moral relations, you are really God's

enemy. From that moment when you resist the claims of moral truth, God must regard you as his enemy, and not by any means as his obedient subject. Not in any figurative sense, but in its most literal sense, *you are his enemy*, and therefore he must be highly displeased with you. If he were not, his own conscience would condemn him. You must know that it must be his duty to reveal to you this displeasure. Since he must feel it, he ought to be open and honest with you. You could not, in reason, wish him to he otherwise. All of you who know moral truth, yet obey it not; who admit obligation which yet you refuse to obey, you are the men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Let this be settled in every one of your minds, that if you restrain the influence of any truth known concerning God and your duty, then *against you* is his wrath revealed from heaven.

IV. *We must next inquire, Wherein and how is this wrath revealed?*

Perhaps some of you are already making this inquiry. Moralists are wont to make it, and to say, "We do not see any wrath coming. If we are as good as professors of religion, why shall we not be saved as well as they?"

Wherein then is God's wrath revealed against this great wickedness?

1. Your conscience affirms that God must be displeased with you. It certifies to you beforehand that you are guilty, and that God cannot accept you.

2. The remorse which will sometimes visit such sinners yet more confirms God's displeasure. True, the feeling of remorse belongs to the sensibility; but none the less does it give admonitory warning. Its voice must be accounted as the voice of God in the human soul. He who made that sensibility so that it will sometimes recoil under a sense of guilt, and turn back to consume the life and joy of the soul, did not make it a *lie*. It is strange that any should suppose this remorse to be itself the punishment threatened of God against sin, and the whole of it. Far from it. This is not that punishment which God has threatened; it is only a premonition of it.

The very fears men feel are often to be taken as an indication that the thing they dread is a reality. Why is it that men in their sins are so often greatly afraid to die? It is no other than a trumpet-tone of the voice of God, sounding up from the depths of their very nature. How can they overlook the fact that these grim forebodings of coming doom are indeed a revelation of wrath, made in the very

nature God has given them!

Another revelation of God's wrath he makes in his juridical abandonment of sinners. God manifests his despair of doing anything more for their salvation when he manifestly withdraws his Spirit and gives them over to hopeless abandonment. Withdrawing his Spirit, he leaves them in great moral blindness. They may have been able to see and to discriminate spiritual things somewhat before, but, after God forsakes them, they seem almost utterly void of this power. Everything is dark; all is confused. The light of the Holy Spirit being withdrawn, it were practically vain for the sinner himself, or for his sympathising friends, to expect his salvation. This mental darkness over all spiritual things is God's curse on his rejection of truth, and significantly forebodes his speedy doom.

Analogous to this is the indication given in a moral paralysis of the conscience. Strangely it seems to have lost its sensibility; its ready tact in moral discrimination is gone; its perceptions seem unaccountably obtuse, and the tone of its voice waxes feeble and almost inaudible. Practically, one might almost as well have no conscience at all.

What does this paralysis of conscience indicate? Plainly, that God has abandoned that soul. The conscience, so long overborne by a perverse will, gives way, and God ceases longer to sustain its vitality.

It is painful to see how persons in this condition strain their endeavours, but such debility comes down upon them -- they become so indifferent; diverting influences are so potent -- they drop their endeavours, powerless. Once their conscience had some activity; truth fell on their mind with appreciable force, and they were aware of resisting it; but, by-and-by, there ensued a state of moral feeling in which the mind is no longer conscious of refusing; indeed, it seems scarcely conscious of anything whatever. He has restrained the influence of truth until conscience has mainly suspended its functions. Like the drunkard, who has lost all perception of the moral wrong of intemperance, and who has brought this insensibility on himself by incessant violations of his better judgment, so the sinner has refused to hear the truth, until the truth now refuses to move him. What is the meaning of this strange phenomenon? It is one of the ways in which God reveals his indignation at man's great wickedness.

An ungodly student, put on the intellectual racecourse alongside of his class-

mates, soon becomes ambitious and jealous. At first, he will probably have some sense of this sin; but he soon loses this sense, and passes on as if unconscious of any sin. What is this but a revelation of God's displeasure?

Again, this wrath against those who hold back the truth in unrighteousness is abundantly revealed in God's word. Think of what Christ said to the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, "Fill ye up, then, the measure of your fathers." What did he mean by that? Their fathers had filled their cup of sin till God could bear with them no longer, and then he filled up his cup of wrath and poured it forth on the nation, and "*there was no remedy*." So Christ intimates it shall be with the scribes and Pharisees. And what is this but to reveal his wrath against them for holding back the truth through unrighteousness?

Again, he lets such sinners *die in their sins*. Observe how, step by step, God gave them one revelation after another of his wrath against their sin; remorse, moral blindness, decay of moral sensibility, and the plain assertions of his word. All these failing, he gives them up to some strong delusion, that they may believe a lie. God himself says, "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." It is painfully instructive to study the workings of modern delusions, especially spiritualism; to notice how it has come in following the track of those great revivals that blessed our country a few years since. Do not I know scores of persons who passed through those revivals unblessed, and now they are mad with this delusion? They saw the glory of God in those scenes of revival power; but they turned away, and now they are mad on their idols, and crazy under their delusions. God has given them up to die in their sins, and it will be *an awful death!* Draw near them gently, and ask a few kind questions; you will soon see that they make no just moral discriminations. All is dark which needs to be light, ere they can find the gate of life.

REMARKS.

1. You may notice the exact difference between saints and sinners, including among sinners all professors of religion who are not in an obedient state of mind. The exact difference is this, saints have adopted God's will as their law of activity, the rule that shall govern all their life and all their heart. You reveal to them God's will; this settles all further controversy. The very opposite of this is true of the sinner. With him, the fact of God's supposed will has no such influence at all; usually no influence of any sort, unless it be to excite his

opposition. Again, the Christian, instead of restraining the influence of truth, acts up to his convictions. If the question of *oughtness* is settled, all is settled. Suppose I go to Deacon A. or Deacon B. and I say, "I want you to do a certain thing; I think you must give so much of your money to this object." He replies, "I don't know about that, my money costs me great labour and pains." But I resume, and say, "Let us look calmly at this question;" and then I proceed to show him that the thing I ask of him is, beyond a doubt, his *duty* to God and to man. He interposes at once," You need not say another word; that is enough. If it is my duty to Christ and to his people, I ask no more." But the sinner is not moved so. He knows his duty beforehand, but he has long been regardless of its claims on him. You must appeal to his selfish interests, if you would reach his heart. With the Christian, you need not appeal to his hopes or his fears. You only need show his duty to God. The sinner you can hope to move only by appeals to his interests. The reason of this is that his adopted course of life is to serve his own interests, nothing higher.

2. With sinners the question of religion is one of loss and gain. But with Christians, it is only a question of right and duty towards God. This makes truth to him all important, and duty imperative. But the sinner only asks, What shall I gain? or What shall I lose? It is wholly a question of danger. Indeed, so true is this, that ministers often assume that the only availing motive with a sinner must be an appeal to his hopes and fears. They have mostly dropped out the consideration of *right* as between the sinner and God. They seem to have forgotten that so far forth as they stop short of the idea of right, and appeal only to the sinner's selfishness, their influence tends to makes *spurious converts*. For if men enter upon the Christian life only *for gain* in the line of their hopes and fears, you must keep up the influence of these considerations, and must expect to work upon these only; that is, you must expect to have selfish Christians and a selfish church. If you say to them, "This is duty," they will reply, "What have we ever cared for *duty?* We were never converted to the doctrine of doing our duty. We became Christians at all, only for the sake of promoting our own interests, and we have nothing to do in the Christian life on any other motive."

Now observe, they may modify this language a little if it seems too repugnant to the general convictions of decent people; but none the less is this their real meaning? They modify its language only on the same general principle of making everything subservient to self.

3. Again, we see how great a mistake is made by those selfish Christians who say, "Am I not honest towards my fellowmen? And is not this a proof of piety?"

What do you mean by "honest"? Are you really honest towards God? Do you regard God's rights as much as you wish him to regard yours? But perhaps you ask as many do, What is my crime? I answer, Is it not enough for you to do nothing, really *nothing*, towards obedience to God? Is it not something serious that you refuse to do God's will and hold back the claims of his truth? What's the use of talking about your *morality*, while you disregard the greatest of all moral claims and obligations -- those that bind you to love and obey God? What can it avail you to say perpetually, Am I not moral and decent towards men?

Why is God not satisfied with this?

4. Ye who think you are almost as good as Christians; in fact, it is much nearer the truth to say that you are almost as bad as devils! Indeed you are fully as bad, save that you do not know as much, and therefore cannot be so wicked. You say, "We are kind to each other." So are devils. Their common purpose to war against God compels them to act in concert. They went in concert into the man possessed with a legion of devils, as we learn in the gospel history. Very likely they are as kind toward each other, in their league against God and goodness, as you are towards your neighbours. So that selfish men have small ground to compliment themselves on being kind and good to each other, while they withstand God, since, in both these respects, they are only like devils in hell.

5. And now, my impenitent hearers -- what do you say? Putting your conduct towards God into plain language, it would run thus: "Thou, Lord, callest on me to repent; I shall refuse. Thou dost strive to enforce my obligation to repent by various truths; I hold back those truths from their legitimate influence on my mind. Thou dost insist on my submission to thy authority; I shall do no such thing."

This, you will see, is only translating your current life and bearing towards God into plain words. If you were really to lift your face toward heaven and utter these words, it would be blasphemy. What do you think of it *now?* Do you not admit, and often assert, that actions speak louder than words? Do they not also speak more *truthfully?*

6. To those of you who are business men, let me make this appeal. What would

you think of men who should treat you as you treat God? You take your account to your customer and you say to him, This account, sir, has been lying a long time past due; will you be so good as to settle it? You cannot deny that it is a fair account of value received, and I understand you have abundant means to pay it. He very coldly refuses. You suggest the propriety of his giving some reasons for this refusal; and he tells you it is a fine time to get large interest on his money, and he therefore finds it more profitable to loan it out than to pay his debts. That is all. He is only selfish; all there is of it is simply this, that he cares for his own interests supremely, and cares little or nothing for yours when the two classes of interests -- his and yours -- come into competition.

When you shall treat God as well as you want your creditors to treat you, then you may hold up your head as, so far, an honest man; but, so long as you do the very thing towards God which you condemn as infinitely mean from your fellowmen towards yourself, you have little ground for self-complacent pride.

All this would be true and forcible, even if God were no greater, no better, and had no higher and no more sacred rights than your own. How much more, then, are they weighty beyond expression, since God is so much greater, better, and holier than mortals!

XI. THE DOOM OF THOSE WHO NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION.

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" -- Hebrews 2:3.

ESCAPE *what?* What can Universalists say to such a question as this? They whose first doctrine proclaims that there can be no danger -- what will they say to this solemn question and its startling assumption of peril from which there shall be no escape? *How* shall we escape? says the inspired author; as if he would imply most strongly that there can be no escape to those who neglect this great salvation.

Salvation; the very term imports safety or deliverance from great impending evil. If there be no such evil, there is no meaning to this term -- no real salvation.

The writer is speaking of the salvation published in the gospel; and the idea that immediately suggested its greatness is the greatness of its author and revealer. It is because Jesus Christ, by whom this gospel came, is so great, compared with angels, that the writer conceives of this salvation as preeminently great and glorious.

This second chapter is closely connected with the first. The train of thought reverts to the fact that God had anciently spoken to their fathers by the prophets; but in these last days, by his Son -- the very brightness of his own glory -- the Upholder of all things, shown all through the Bible to be higher than angels, through whose ministrations, also, the divine word had sometimes come to mortals. Now, then, since the word, so revealed by angels, carried with it the sternest authority; and every sort of transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall men escape who neglect a salvation so great that even God's glorious Son is sent from heaven to earth to reveal it! He, the *Exalted Son*, came down to create and reveal this, salvation; he wrought it out in death, confirming his divine mission while he lived, by miracles; must it not then be a matter of supreme importance?

Yet the Bible has not left us to infer its greatness from the glory of its Author alone; it presents to us the greatness of this salvation in many other points of view.

It is great in its very *nature*. It is *salvation from death in sin*.

Let men talk and gainsay as they will, this one great fact is given us by human consciousness, *that men are dead in sin.* Every man knows this. We all know that, apart from God's quickening Spirit, we have no heart to love God. Each sinner knows that, whatever may be his powers as a moral agent, yet, left to himself, there is in him a moral weakness that effectually shuts him off from salvation, save as God interposes with efficient help. Hence the salvation that meets him in this weakness, and turns him effectually to love and to please God, must be intrinsically great.

Again, it is great because it *delivers from endless sinning and suffering*. Just think of that: *endless suffering*. How long could you bear even the slightest degree of pain, supposing it to continue without intermission? How long ere you would find it unendurable? Experiments in this matter often surprise us; such, for example, as the incessant fall of single drops of water upon the head, a kind of torture sometimes inflicted on slaves. The first drops are scarcely noticed; but, ere long, the pain becomes excruciating, and ultimately unendurable.

Just think of any kind of suffering which goes on ever increasing! Suppose it to increase constantly for one year; would you not think this to be awful? Suppose it to increase without remission for one hundred years; can you estimate the fearful amount? What, then, must it be if it goes on increasing *for* ever!

It matters not how rapid or how slow this increase; the amount, if its duration be eternal, must be ineffably appalling! Nor does it matter much how great or how little the degree at the outset; suppose it ever so small, yet eternal growth must make it beyond measure appalling! You may suppose the amount of woe endured to be represented by one drop for the first thousand years; yet let it increase for the next thousand, and yet more for the next, and, ere eternity shall have rolled away, the amount will be an *ocean!* It would take a great while to fill up such an ocean as the Atlantic by giving it one drop in each thousand years -- yet time would fill it; it would take yet longer to fill the Pacific at the same rate -- but time would suffice to fill it; more time would fill up the Indian Ocean; more yet would cover this globe; more would fill all the vast space between us and fixed stars; but even this lapse of time would not exhaust eternity. It would not even begin to measure eternal duration. How fearful, then, must be that woe which knows no limit save eternity!

Some deny the sufferings of the wicked to be penal inflections, and insist that they are only the natural consequence of sinning. I shall not stop now to enter

upon any argument on this point; but I ask, What difference does that make as to the amount or endurableness of eternal woe? Penal or not penal, the Bible represents it as eternal, and its very nature shows that it must be for ever increasing. How, then, can it be essentially lessened by the question, whether it be or be not penal infliction? Whether God has so constituted all moral agents that their sin, allowed to work out its legitimate results, will entail misery enough to answer all those fearful descriptions given us in the Bible, or whether, in addition to all that misery, God inflicts yet more, penally, and this enlarged amount makes up the eternal doom denounced on the finally wicked, it surely can be of small consequence to decide, so far forth as *amount* of suffering is concerned.

Some deny that the cause of this suffering is material fire. They may even scoff at this and think that, by so doing, they have extinguished the flames of hell, and have thus annihilated all future punishment. How vain! Can a sinner's scoff frustrate the Almighty? Did the Almighty God ever lack means to execute his word? What matters it, whether the immediate agent in the sinner's sufferings be fire or something else of which fire is the fittest emblem? Can your scoffs make it any the less fearful?

This fearful woe is the fruit of sinning; and is therefore inevitable, save as you desist from sinning while yet mercy may be found. Once in hell, you will know that while you continue to sin, you must continue to *suffer*.

The language used in the Bible to describe the sinner's future woe is very terrible. We may call it figurative. I suppose those terms to be figures of speech, but I cannot tell. I have never been there. If any one here has been, let him speak.

It certainly *may* be literal fire. No one of us can certainly know that it is not. It must be something *equal to* fire; for we cannot suppose that God would deceive us. Whoever else may speak extravagantly, God never does! He never puts forth great swelling words of vanity -- sounding much, but meaning little. Take it, then, which way you please, it is an awful revelation -- to die in your sins; to go away into a furnace of fire; to be among those the smoke of whose torment ascendeth up for ever and ever! How strikingly is this doom symbolised in the smoke of those doomed cities of the plain, "set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"! Their "smoke ascended as the smoke of a great furnace." Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw it! What sort of a night did he spend after that appalling scene? He had risen early, had made his way through

the morning dew to the hill-top overlooking Sodom, and then he saw the smoke of those doomed cities ascending to heaven. So may the Christian parent perhaps wend his way to the hill-tops of the heavenly city, and look over into the great pit, where the ungodly weep and wail for evermore! Shall it be that any of your unsaved children will be deep in that pit of woe!

Observe again, this salvation is not merely *negative* -- a salvation from sin and from suffering; it has also a *positive* side. On this positive side, it includes perfect holiness and endless blessedness. It is not only deliverance from never-ending and ever-accumulating woe; it is also endless bliss -- exceeding, in both kind and degree, all we can conceive in this life. This is not the world to realise the full bliss of unalloyed purity. There will be sin around us; there will yet be some sad traces of it within us. Yet who of us does not sometimes catch a distinct view of that purity and blessedness which we know reigns in heaven? Most blessed views these are, yet no doubt dim and weak, compared with the great reality. When that bliss shall be perfect; when nothing more is left us to desire, but every desire of our soul is filled to its utmost capacity, and we shall have the full assurance that this blessedness must increase with the expansion of our powers and with our advance in knowledge as we gaze with ever-growing interest into the works of the great God, this will be *heaven!* All this is only one side -- the positive side of that blessedness which comes with this great salvation.

Now set yourselves to balance these two things, one against the other; an ever-growing misery and an ever-growing blessedness. Find some measuring line by which you can compare them.

You may recall the figure I have more than once mentioned here. An old writer says, Suppose a little bird is set to remove this globe by taking from it one grain of sand at a time, and to come only once in a thousand years. She takes her first grain, and away she flies on her long and weary course, and long, long, are the days ere she returns again. It will doubtless seem to many as if she never would return; but when a thousand years have rolled away, she comes panting back for one more grain of sand -- and this globe is again lessened by just one grain of its almost countless sands. So the work goes on. So eternity wears away -- only it does not exhaust itself a particle. That little bird will one day have finished her task, and the last sand will have been taken away; but even then eternity will have only begun: its sands are never to be exhausted. One would suppose that

the angels would become so old, so hoary, with the weight of centuries, and every being so old, they would be weary of life; but this supposing only shows that we are judging of the effects of time in that eternal state by its observed effect in this transient world. But we fail to consider that God made this world for a transient *life -- that for* one that shall never pass away.

Taking up again our figure of the little bird removing the sands of our globe, we may extend it, and suppose that, after she had finished this world, she takes up successively the other planets of our system -- Mercury, and Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and Herschel, each and all on the same law -- one grain each thousand years, and when these are all exhausted, then the sun, and then each of the fixed stars; until the hundreds of thousands of those stupendous orbs are all removed and gone. But even then eternity is not exhausted. We have not yet even an approximation towards its end. End? There is no end! That poor old bird makes progress. Though exceedingly slow, she will one day have done her appointed task. But she will not even then have come any nearer to the end of eternity! Eternity! Who can compute it? No finite mind; and yet this idea is not fiction, but sober fact. There is no possible room for mistake -- no ground for doubt.

Moreover, no truth can be more entirely and intensely practical than this. Every one of us here -- every one of all our families, every child -- all these students -- are included. It concerns us all. Before us, each and all, lies this eternal state of our being. We are all to live in this eternal state. There awaits us there either woe or bliss, without measure and beyond all our powers of computation. If woe, it will be greater than all finite minds can conceive. Suppose all the minds ever created were to devote their powers to compute this suffering -- to find some adequate measure that shall duly represent it; alas, they could not even begin! Neither could they any better find measures to contain the *bliss*, on the other hand, of those who are truly the children of God. All the most expressive language of our race would say, It is not in me to measure infinite bliss or infinite woe; all the figures within the grasp of all created imaginations would fade away before the stupendous undertaking. Yet this infinite bliss and endless woe are the plain teaching of the Bible, and are in harmony with the decisive affirmations of the human reason. We know that, if we continue in sin, the misery must come upon us; if we live and die in holiness, the bliss will come.

And is this the theme, and are these the great facts, which these young men may

go abroad to the ends of the world and proclaim to every creature, and which these young women also may speak of everywhere in the society where they move? Truly they have a glorious and sublime message to bear!

Again, suppose the joy resulting from this salvation to be a mild form of peace and quiet of soul. We may suppose this, although we cannot forget that the Bible represents it as being a "joy unspeakable and full of glory"; but suppose it were only a mild, quiet joy. Even then, an eternal accumulation of it -- a prolongation of it during eternal ages, considering, also, that naturally it must for ever increase -- will amount to an infinite joy. Indeed, it matters little how small the unit with which you start, yet let there be given an eternal duration, coupled with ceaseless growth and increase, and how vast the amount!

According to the Bible, this blessedness of the holy *is* the full fruition of God's love. Hence the bliss which it involves can be nothing short of infinite. It can have no limit. A really comprehensive view of what it will be would be overpowering. Who of you could bear the view of your future selves? Could you who are saints? Suppose you could see yourselves as you will exist ten thousand years hence. Suppose you were for a moment endowed with the power to penetrate the future and see yourself as you will be before the throne of God. If you were not apprised that it is yourself, you might fall down and worship!

Or suppose the wicked could see their future selves as they will be ten thousand years hence; could see how full of torment they will be, and what unutterable woes their souls shall bear there, could they endure the sight?

And here does some one say, How very extravagant you are! Extravagant? Nothing can be further from the truth than to hold these views to be extravagant. For, grant only *immortality*, and all that I have said must follow of necessity. Let it be admitted that the soul exists for ever, and not a word that I have said is too much. Indeed, when you carry out that great fact to its legitimate results under the moral government of God, all these descriptions seem exceedingly flat -- they fall so very far short of the truth.

In the next place, let it be considered that neglect of this great salvation is fatal. So our text most emphatically implies, so the Bible often elsewhere most unqualifiedly affirms. No sinner, therefore, need go about to weary himself to commit iniquity, as if he would fain make sure his doom; for mere neglect is fatal. What more should he want?

But let us inquire, What is to be regarded as *fatal* neglect? For all have, at some time, been guilty of some neglect.

We shall reach the true answer to our question by asking another, viz. What is *effectual attention?*

Plainly that, and only that, which ensures gospel repentance and faith in Christ; only that which ensures personal holiness and, thus, final salvation. That is, therefore, effectual attention which arouses the soul thoroughly to take hold of Jesus Christ as the offered Saviour. To fall short of this is fatal neglect. You may have many good things about you -- may make many good resolves and hopeful efforts; yet, failing in this main thing, you fail utterly.

REMARKS.

1. You need only be a little less than fully in earnest, and you will certainly fall short of salvation. You may have a good deal of feeling and a *hopeful earnestness*; but if you are only less than fully in earnest, you will surely fail. The work will not be done. You are guilty of fatal neglect, for you have never taken the decisive step. Who of you is he that is a little less than fully in earnest? You are the one who will weary yourself for naught and in vain. You must certainly fall short of salvation.

2. It must be great folly to do anything short of effectual effort. Many are just enough in earnest to deceive themselves. They pay just enough attention to this subject to get hold of it wrong, and do only just enough to fall short of salvation, and go down to death with a lie in their right hand. If they were to stay away from all worship, it would shock them. Now, they go to the assemblies of God's people and do many things hopeful; but, after all, they fall short of entering in at the door into Christ's fold. What folly is this! Why should any of you do this foolish thing! This doing only just enough to deceive yourself and others is the very course to please Satan. Nothing else could so completely serve his ends. He knows very well that where the gospel is generally understood, he must not preach infidelity openly, nor Universalism, nor atheism. Neither would do. But if he can just keep you along, doing a little less than enough, he is sure of his man. He wants to see you holding fast to a false hope. Then he knows you are the greatest possible stumbling-block, and are doing the utmost you can to ruin the souls of men.

3. This salvation is life's great work. If not made such, it had best be left alone. To put it in any other relation is worse than nothing. If you make it second to anything else, your course will surely be ineffectual -- a lie, a delusion, a damnation!

Are you giving your attention effectually to this great subject? Who of you are? Have you this testimony in your own conscience, that you seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? And have you become acquainted with Christ? Do you know him as your Life and your Hope? Have you the joy and peace of believing? Can you give to yourself and to others a really satisfactory reason for the hope that is in you?

This is life's great work -- the great work of earth; and now, in whom of you is it effectually begun? You cannot do it at all without a thorough and right beginning. I am jealous of some of you that you have not begun right -- that you have mistaken conviction for conversion. Like some of Bunyan's characters, I fear you have clambered over the wall into the palace, and did not come in by the gate. Do you ask me why I fear this of you? I will answer only by asking a question back. Don't you think I have reason to fear it? Have you the consciousness of being pure in heart, and of growing purer? Do you plan everything with reference to this great work of salvation? What are the ways of life that you have marked out for yourself? and on what principle have you shaped them? On what subjects are you most sensitive? What most thoroughly awakens your sensibility? If there is a prayer-meeting to pray for the salvation of sinners, are you there? Is your heart there?

4. It is infinite folly to make the matter of personal salvation only a secondary matter; for to do so is only to neglect it after all. Unless it has your whole heart, you virtually neglect it, for nothing less than your whole heart is the devotion due. To give it less than your whole heart is truly to insult God, and to insult the subject of salvation.

What shall we think of those who seem never to make any progress at all? Is it not very plain that they give much less than their whole hearts to this matter? It is most certain that if they gave their whole hearts intelligently to it, they would make progress -- would speedily find their way to Christ. To make no progress is therefore a decisive indication of having no real heart in this pursuit. How can such escape, seeing they neglect so great salvation?

XII. ALL THINGS FOR GOOD TO THOSE THAT LOVE GOD.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." -- Romans 8:28.

You will observe that the apostle speaks with all confidence. He does not say, We expect, or we believe, or we conjecture, that all will be well for God's friends; but he says, *We know*. There is no doubt about it.

Let us then,

I. INQUIRE, WHAT DOES HIS LANGUAGE MEAN?

II. SHOW HOW THE RESULT OF GOOD TO ALL THAT LOVE GOD IS SECURED;

III. NOTICE SOME PARTICULARS AS ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE GENERAL TRUTH;

IV. SHOW HOW WE KNOW IT TO BE TRUE.

I. *What is the apostle's meaning?*

Here the great question is, Shall his language be interpreted as strictly universal?

In terms, he announces a universal proposition. All *things*, he declares, work together for good to those that love God. But does he mean to affirm a proposition strictly universal?

Not all universal language should be taken in a strictly universal sense. In the Scriptures we not infrequently find it necessary to modify universal language. There may be things in the text or context which forbid the universal sense, or there may be declarations in other parts of the Bible which preclude it; or the nature of the case may render the universal sense either violently improbable, or perhaps absurd, and hence may demand some modification. It should be remembered that the language of the Bible is the language of common life, and everybody knows that in the language of common life, we often affirm in the form of universal proposition when we really mean something much short of this. For example, it is common to say of a well-known fact, "Everybody says so"; but our "everybody" is by no means intended to embrace all mankind.

But the language of our text I do understand to be used in the strictly universal sense, meaning that absolutely all things, present and future, all things, above and beneath, in heaven, earth, and hell, do and will conspire to the ultimate blessedness of the saints. The Bible obviously teaches this doctrine, and I know of no facts in the universe that militate against its universal application.

II. *How does this come about? How is this result secured?*

In order to see this matter in its true light, we need to consider that the happiness of moral agents is conditioned on their holiness, and results from it. The holy will, of course, be happy, and have real enjoyment, in proportion to the degree in which they are holy. Still further, let it be considered that the holiness of moral agents is conditioned upon their knowledge. Every moral agent is more or less holy according as he knows more or less, and is more or less conformed in heart and life to what he knows. I speak now particularly of the knowledge of God, whether obtained through his word or through his works.

Now all events are matters of knowledge, and not only all events that occur under God's government, but God himself is also an object of knowledge. According to the Bible, all events will ultimately be known to the saints, for the judgment day will bring them all to light. Hence we learn that ultimately the entire history of all God's doing will be known to all his creatures. All he has ever done or shall ever do, whether in this world or in other worlds, will be open subjects of knowledge to his creatures, and be known as fast and as far as their limited capacities will admit.

Now it is very plain that if all things, embracing all events and all the works of God, are matters of knowledge; and if, moreover, knowledge is a condition of real holiness; then all the knowledge which the saints attain will be at once available to their happiness. It will go to enhance their real blessedness. Especially will this be true of their knowledge of God and of his countless works and various ways. All things, the saints will then see, are parts of one great plan, both those which God himself performs by his direct agency, and those which are done through his permissive agency by his creatures. It will then be seen that all things are arranged and planned for the good of his obedient children; and when this great, all-controlling principle in God's administration comes to be seen in all its bearings, the knowledge of this truth cannot fail to be a source of ineffable blessedness to all the holy. God's infinite grace as the great and good Father of all his loving children, will be so revealed as to show that he makes all

things work together for their good.

III. *Some particulars as illustrations of the general truth*.

It is generally supposed that what we call mercies and blessings and what we recognise by name as God's good gifts to men, are really good things, to those that love God. We can see that they are, and men universally recognise them as good.

The same is equally true of what we call judgments and chastisements -- the rebukes of God; for all these, too, are means of grace, and are blessed of God for the spiritual good of his children. Their only design as they come from our Father's hand is that they may work out good to his saints. He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men from caprice, or from any pleasure in their pain, but only and wholly for their profit, that they may the more deeply "partake of his holiness." Under this broad principle, we know that all the losses and crosses which befall the saints, all their burdens of care and responsibility, and all their infirmities, shall be overruled for their good. All these things will conspire to teach the saints more of God and more of themselves. By the aid of such revelations they will be able the better to appreciate God's character and plans of discipline, and their own infinite obligation to his manifold grace.

Nor from the "all things" of our text can we except the sins of God's people. They are indeed altogether blameworthy for all their sins, and none the less so for the good which God educes from them by his overruling agency. The sin of Peter was overruled of God for his good. He was a more humble and a better man as long as he lived. He better knew his own weakness, and better appreciated Christ's tender compassion. He felt the force of the admonition, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," and there was none among all the original twelve to whom Christ said more emphatically, "Feed my sheep" -- "Feed my lambs."

This sin of Peter brought him into great peril.

Satan desired to have him that he might sift him as "wheat," and if Christ had left him to himself, he would doubtless have fallen fatally into the snare of the devil. But Christ did not leave him in this hour of his need. "I have prayed for thee," said he, "that thy faith fail not." Christ kept his hand and eye on him, and soon plucked him from the destroyer's grasp. In this scene Peter learned more of the

length and depth of his Saviour's grace than he had ever known before.

This is only a single case, yet it was by no means a peculiar case, and therefore it serves to illustrate the general law of God's administration over his people.

Similar was the case of David. No thanks to him, but all thanks to God, that his sin was overruled, so as in the issue to make him a more meek, humble, penitent, and holy man.

Not only are the sins of the saints overruled to their good, but the sins of others, of sinners, and even of the most wicked. All the mistakes of our associates, their infirmities, the thousand nameless things that try us and perhaps perplex us greatly, all these come in among the "all things" which God makes subservient to the good of his people. There is a woman whose husband is a bad man. His temper is uncomfortable; his ways are adapted to make his intimate associates unhappy, and hence he causes his wife many sore trials. Yet if she loves God, and makes him the Refuge of her soul, all these little trials shall certainly work out her good both in this world and the next.

Not less so of the husband who has a bad wife. Not less so of those unhappy families in which the husband and the wife are great trials to each other. So of parents and children. Parents may be a source of trial to their children, and it often happens that children are a source of the greatest trial to their parents. But howsoever the trials occur, the great principle of our text applies to them all. To those that love God, they shall all work together for good.

The principle also reaches and applies to all the temptations of the devil. Let him poison his darts with demoniac skill and hurl them with hellish malice, they shall not ultimately harm those that sincerely love God. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower into which the righteous run and are safe." The Christian has a panoply complete, wherewith he may be able to withstand all the fiery darts of the devil. And what is more to our present purpose: though wounded by these darts, he shall not be slain, though cast down, he shall not be destroyed; for there is a healing, overruling hand under whose agency even the wounds that Satan inflicts shall be wrought into better health and more spiritual vitality than the saints enjoyed before. God knows how to foil Satan with his own weapons, and make even his apparent temporary success react in terrible defeat and disgrace upon his own head. God knows how not only to rescue his saints, but to do much more than simply to rescue them: He imbues them with new vigour, and

sanctifies to them their most bitter and humiliating experience.

Yet further, all events are designed to illustrate God's true character. The whole creation is only a revelation of God, and all events that occur in it only serve to reveal more and more of God to intelligent beings. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the firmament showeth his handiwork." How many lectures upon God are read to us by the silent stars! How many lessons are repeated to us, day by day, by his rising suns and nightly dews and timely showers! Where in all the works of God, whether in nature or providence, is there a thing that does not speak his praise, and bear some testimony which he can bless to the souls of his saints?

IV. *All things work together for good to the saints*.

So says Paul. *How* did he and his brethren know this to be true? Perhaps they knew it by revelations already made in God's word; or it may be that his mind rested this truth upon the general knowledge of God enjoyed. It is a matter of revelation. The Bible amply affirms this truth. And it is also a plain dictate of reason. When we come to understand what God's attributes are as affirmed by the reason, we shall see that such a God can suffer nothing to occur which shall not in some way result in good to his friends. This must be so, if it be true that God loves his friends, studies to promote their highest good, has all events under his control, had his choice in the depths of a past eternity among all possible events, and could determine to cause and suffer to exist such only as should subserve the ends that lay near his heart.

It is often a matter of experience and observation in this world that things which seem freighted with destruction turn out to be full of life and salvation. For a time, all looked dark and desolate, but light and joy came out at last. Look at the case of Job. You can scarcely think of one form of grief and sorrow which did not blend in the throng that rushed upon him, as if to crush him; but he lived to see all these things work together for good to himself both for time and eternity. So, in general, I remark, that observation and experience will often show that this doctrine applies even to the present life, and has its exemplification even here. Yet the apostle did not mean to affirm that God's plans have their full development in the present world. His affirmation contemplated a future world in which results but partially unfolded here can have their full and everlasting development.

REMARKS.

1. Saints will in eternity blame themselves for what they cannot on the whole regret. Seeing the results which God has educed by his overruling agency, they cannot wish they had never done those wicked things; yet surely they will none the less blame themselves for their own sins. As to the blame of sin, no matter how much good may come from our wrong-doing, it never can affect the question of our guilt, nor its measure. Take the case of Judas. No thanks to him that his infamous treason was one of the agencies which provided a Saviour for a ruined world. The good which accrued from the death of Christ changes not the intrinsic character of his sin: cannot in any measure make it less mean, less sordid, less revengeful. Hence he must blame himself as much as if no good, but only evil, had resulted from his betrayal of Christ. It was God alone, by his own infinite wisdom and power, who overruled this sin to great good. All praise therefore to him, and none the less blame to Judas the traitor.

2. Our subject shows how the saints can be perfectly happy in heaven to all eternity. For there is in many minds a point of obscurity in this matter which needs explanation. The saints will see all their past sins in heaven's clear light, and they cannot but blame themselves for every sin they ever committed. How, then, can they be perfectly happy?

The answer is, they will see how their sins have been overruled for good, and they will rejoice in this good which God brings out of their iniquities. In this exercise of joy, they will be deeply humble, as indeed they will have all reason to be, and their joy will be purely a joy in God, blended with everlasting adoration and praise that he hath both the power and the heart to bring so much good out of their own wrong doings. Every view taken by a saint in heaven of his past sins will redound in praise to God, but in deeper humiliation to himself. Yet this humiliation will by no means conflict with the saint's happiness -- for he enjoys being humble -- he enjoys giving *all glory and praise* to God.

3. God blames a multitude of things, but has no regrets. He has often expressed himself as we do when we feel regret, but these forms of expression are shaped in accommodation to our modes of speaking, and when used by God, should be interpreted in accordance with his known character and known relations. It cannot be that, on the whole, under all the circumstances of the case, he really regrets the occurrence of anything that takes place. He blames the guilty author, he condemns the sin; but it has not taken him by surprise; it is no new thing to

him, and it has not in any wise frustrated his purposes and plans for the government of the universe. Before this sin was committed, or its author existed, God saw how he could overrule it for good, and for so much good, that, on the whole, he judged it better to let its author come into existence and commit this sin, rather than prevent either the one or the other. Yet he blames every sin as much as if no good could be educed from it. The sinner is none the better for this development of good through God's overruling agency. To God alone belongs all the praise; for both the good intention and the good results are his alone. But for his good hand interposing, all the results would have been evil, and the sinner's intention is, of course, all evil, and only evil continually.

Yet while God blames both sinners and saints for all their sins, he freely forgives the believing penitent and accepts him as a son. Then he so overrules the sin as not to be agonised by anything that occurs.

We sometimes see results corresponding to this in the earthly discipline which parents exercise over their children. The parent sees that his child has sinned; at first he regrets the thing exceedingly; but having, in the fear and help of God, done his utmost to reclaim and improve his child, he sees his efforts crowned with the divine blessing, and he says, That sin of my dear child almost killed me, but now I see him so much changed for the better, that I can no longer regret the means which have resulted in so much good.

4. From this it does not follow that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good. For if, under the very circumstances in which they sin, men would obey rather than disobey -- do right rather than wrong -- then yet greater good might accrue than accrues from God's overruling of their sin. But God prefers his own course to any other which he can take. Under the circumstances he always does the wisest and best thing possible to him, and hence he has no occasion for regret. He brings out the greatest good possible to himself. If his creatures who do in fact sin, would be persuaded to do right instead of wrong, their agency for good, concurrent with his, would educe a still augmented good.

For illustration: a father commands his son to perform some certain work. But he has good reason to believe that the son will not do it unless he himself stays at home to control the son by his presence. Yet it is so important for him to go away that he decides to go, though at the hazard of his son's disobedience. In case the son disobeys, he trusts he can subject him to such discipline as shall bring out some good, and the good to be secured by his own presence elsewhere

is too great to be sacrificed. The greatest good possible can be secured only by the concurrent agency of father and son. The father can secure the greatest good possible to himself by going away, even though his son should disobey in his absence.

5. But if sin were overruled so as to be at last the means of the *greatest* good, no thanks to the sinner. Suppose it were the case that the whole world would have been damned if Judas had not betrayed Christ, so that his sin secured the salvation of the world -- no thanks to Judas for such a result, for he meant not so, neither did his heart think so. He intended no good to the world, nor to any being in it except himself. His act of betraying his friend would be none the less mean, sordid, and revengeful, for the good which in the case supposed would ensue. The good wrought out would be wholly attributable to God.

6. It is naturally impossible to sin benevolently. There can be no such thing as a benevolent sin. To sin with a design to do good is an absurdity in terms. To say, therefore, that we do evil that good may come, is absurd and impossible. To do evil for the sake and with the motive of securing real good is a self-contradiction. For the doing evil implies a wicked intention, and the having a good end in view implies a good intention. But to have both a good intention and a bad intention at the same instant, each determining the same act, is surely a self-contradiction. If a man intends good by his act, it is not sin. No man ever sinned in order that it might redound to the glory of God. No tyrant ever persecuted the saints of God that it might do them good. Suppose a wicked man were to say, My wife is a good woman; let me plague her now for her good. It will only make her a better woman, so let me torment her all I can. There is no way in which I can do her so much good.

He can't do any such thing! It is naturally impossible that a man should be honest in trying to do good by wickedness. This sinning benevolently is a natural impossibility.

7. Saints should always be in a position to fall back upon God in all their trials in this life. They should stand in such relations to God that they can rationally and naturally trust him to shape and control all events, even here, so as to make them work out good in the highest degree. If they walk humbly before God, they may know that all things shall be made to conspire for their good. Only let them truly love God and trust him; then they need not fear the issues of any events whatever that may occur. None can occur without God's permission, or

independently of his direction. They may therefore be assured that God will shape all their bearings for the good of those that love him.

But if professed Christians are living in sin, they have no claim on this promise and no right to expect its fulfillment to themselves. But if they are not in sin, they may, like Micah, cry out triumphantly, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

8. This truth affords ground for strong consolation to the saints. Why should they ever be sad? Suppose all things do not apparently work well now. Let them still have faith in God and rest in his promises. Has he not said that all things shall work together for good to his loving friends? No wonder saints are often seen smiling through their tears, for joy lies deep in their souls, though sadness may overcloud their face. Joys and sorrows are often strangely blended in their bosom. Calamities, disappointments, bereavements befall them as they do other men, and these things are not for the present joyous but grievous -- but their faith in God assures them that all will yet be well. Many things will befall them in life that burn and agonise their sensibility; but deep within are trust and faith in God and a sweet leaning upon his promises -- for they know that the ground of their consolation is firm and strong as the pillars of the universe!

9. We may rejoice in whatever befalls any of God's real children, whether ourselves or others. Parents may rejoice in whatever befalls their godly children or friends. Many things may occur which cause tears now; yet, as Christians, our watchword should be, *It will surely be well for them in the latter end*. The things which give the severest shock will do most good, and those which seem most afflictive, when God has brought out all their results, may be found to be most blest to his saints. Those fearful events which seemed to come with a crash, as if they would break down all the pillars of your foundation -- oh, how sweet to see even those strange things so strangely overruled for the good of the saints!

10. Very few Christians can live a single week, or even a day, without needing the consolation which this truth affords. Hence they ought to hold it fast, to keep it treasured in their memory -- lying near their hearts -- ready to be applied for consolation and for strength in every emergency.

This truth may well reconcile the saints to any and all events of divine providence. They can afford to be submissive while they know that their Father

will make all things work together for their good. They can afford to have travail and suffering, for even their most intense sorrows shall all conspire to work out good to their souls. Therefore let not unbelief deprive us of this consolation. Apart from the light of faith, many things will occur that are inexplicably dark, but faith illumines and explains all.

How wonderful are God's marvelous works! Well may it be said of him, "He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Results may lie hidden long, but they will come out at last in glorious sunlight, showing that God's hand has guided events to their results with unerring wisdom. In the light of eternity, if not in the light of time, they shall see it all, and seeing it shall wonder and adore. God, they will shout aloud, hath done all things well! Then, do not allow yourselves now to be deprived of this great consolation.

But do you say, "Ah, if I only knew that I am a child of God, if I only knew that I really love God, then I could receive this consolation legitimately; then I could feel that it belongs to me; then I could say, Let come anything that God is pleased to send, for I am anchored in his love and on his promises?"

Now you may be very guilty for these doubts, for surely you may be free from them altogether; but still if, with all your doubtings, you are really God's child, they shall all be overruled for your good, so that in heaven you will have it to say, How wonderful are God's ways! That he should bring me out of a region so dark and desolate, and then make all my doubts and darkness subserve some useful ends to my own soul and to his glory -- that out of such materials he should bring out any good at last -- how wonderful!

Finally, we can see that the volumes of glory and praise to God must be to all eternity continually accumulating. Fresh revelations each hour of his wonderful wisdom and love must evolve from humble and holy hearts fresh accessions of praise and honour to his blessed name. Is it not delightful to think that such a God shall be thus praised and honoured through eternity!

XIII. ALL THINGS CONSPIRE FOR EVIL TO THE SINNER.

"Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." -- Isaiah 3:11.

"When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." -- Psalms 42:7.

"To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." -- Deut. 32:35.

"Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." -- II Pet. 2:3.

FROM the bare reading of these passages you will see that they present a direct contrast to the great truth of our morning discourse, in that it was shown that all things work together for good to those that love God. In this our text leads to the opposite truth in regard to the sinner. All things conspire together for their ruin. All tends to complete and aggravate their destruction.

This awful truth is taught throughout the Bible in a great variety of forms. I have read to you a few of the passages which affirm it; I might read many others, but it cannot be necessary.

Obligation is imposed on moral agents by the light of truth. To know truth respecting duty is the condition of obligation. When moral agents are able to understand it, then the value of the good to be sought measures the obligation to seek it. All are bound to be benevolent, in other words, to seek the good of all beings. To know that any beings need some particular form of good, and that under existing circumstances you are capable of securing to them this good, imposes on you the obligation to secure it, which obligation is the greater by how much the greater is the good in question. Hence, as knowledge increases, so does guilt increase. The more you know of your duty and of the interests that depend upon faithfully doing it, the greater your guilt if you refuse to do it. On the supposition that the moral agent remains in sin, refusing to do known duty, then, the more his knowledge increases, the greater must be his guilt.

As all events are to be made public under God's moral government, it is for his

own interest, as well as for the interest of his creatures, that he should apprise them fully of his character and of the principles of his government; and, to make all clear to finite minds, it is important that he should spread out before them somewhat fully the details of his moral administration, so as to leave nothing involved in darkness or doubt, on any important subject, to any honest mind. It seems essential to the well-working of God's moral government that he should, at least ultimately, illustrate his own acts so fully as to leave no ground of cavil, that every mouth may be stopped, and every candid mind in the universe be satisfied in regard to all his works and to every point in his vast administration.

Who can doubt that the great governor of the universe will vindicate his own conduct? Who can suppose that he will leave one dark point unexplained?

Hence, as all events are to be made known, both for the vindication of God's character and for the instruction of all moral agents, it follows that the destruction of the wicked will be aggravated by every accession of light to their minds. Every new revelation of God's works or ways which is made to them must conspire, (1) to enlighten their minds, and (2), by consequence, to deepen their guilt and enhance and aggravate their doom.

This is, beyond question, the truth in respect to the sinner's relation to God and to his government. It presents the subject, however, in an abstract form. Let us therefore proceed to notice some of the particulars, which illustrate this truth.

Men will be held responsible for mercies abused. Hence those things which most please sinners, and which they call their good things, are charged to their account, and they must be held to the strictest accountability for their use or abuse of all their good things. The sinner is charged in God's book with every breath he breathes, with every meal he eats -- with every draught of God's water that he drinks -- with every day's health that he enjoys, and with every night's rest. He is, indeed, welcome to all these good things, if he uses them as he ought to; but if he will use these blessings in the devil's service, he must give account thereof to God. Why should he not? The Bible most abundantly teaches this truth. It assumes that wicked men rob God, and that for this guilt they must be held to a strict account.

If these are facts, then sinners are getting deeply in debt. As a man who in his business never pays but runs himself more and more deeply in debt, so sinners are constantly swelling their black account with their great Benefactor. The rain

and the sunshine he sends them; the food and the friends he grants them, every one of these things, used in sin and for sin, spent on their lusts and with an ungrateful heart towards the Giver, must all pass on to his book of account to be settled in the great reckoning day.

Everything, therefore, that now pleases the sinner so much will swell the mass of things that shall agonise him at the judgment-day and throughout his eternal existence. Why do not sinners consider that a day of reckoning *will come*, and that one of the most fearful things then to be canvassed will be the long catalogue of abused mercies? These things are good in themselves, yet it is better you should never have had them, than that you should pervert them to purposes of sin and self-indulgence and ingratitude. Ah, it were better for you that you should never have been born, than that you should pervert the powers God gives you, to make yourself a guilty rebel against your Maker. Better that you should never have health than that you should use it in sin. Many of you bless yourselves that you live while others die; but if you abuse life, it were better that you had died long ago -- yea, better that you had never been born. Take heed how you deem yourself fortunate for having so much health; you cannot afford to have any health at all, if you abuse it in sin, and lay up a fearful account to render for every hour's comfort. How can you afford to live, while every hour's life swells your fearful debt, and makes you worse and worse a bankrupt, on the great books of the final day!

Not only all these countless mercies, but all the particulars embraced under them and connected with them, are to come into your account. All will prove a great curse to you if selfishly abused.

The same principle applies to the entire course of God's discipline towards you, embracing the various rebukes of his providence. The Lord, for purposes of discipline, may smite your property or your person. He may give wings to your riches and a blight on your strength. Losses may checker the scene of your long prosperity, or by pain and weakness the Lord may seek to impress your soul with a sense of dependence on an almighty arm. All these are measures taken for your good, but if you will not improve them, they will only work out your deeper ruin. There is a sinner who has been brought down to the verge of the grave by sickness. His Heavenly Father sought by this means to induce serious thoughts and true repentance, but he sought in vain. The heart was made no better by this affliction. The sick man recovered through divine mercy, and he blessed himself

for his restored health, but it cannot be said that he blessed his great benefactor. He blessed himself, and thought of his good fortune, but Oh! how much better for him to have gone quick to his grave, than that he should rise from his sick-bed only to have a harder heart and a blacker account to settle through all eternity with his insulted Benefactor.

Perhaps the deluded man said to himself on his recovery, Now God has punished me all I deserve, and I have no more punishment to fear for my sins. Far otherwise! He has not been punished at all. These trials on earth are only chastisements, intended for moral discipline. God sent them as the most hopeful means for doing you good, but you have utterly resisted and defeated his intention; you have only converted into a curse what your Father sent upon you for a blessing.

How marvelous that wicked men should suppose that these light afflictions are the proper punishment of sin! No; these are only God's means of discipline, employed here in this life for the good of men's souls. Instead of being themselves the retribution due for sin, they are only the guarantees sent on beforehand by the Great King, involving his pledge that he *will* punish sin unless he can secure repentance. They imply God's holy abhorrence of sin; they are the incipient manifestations of the great truth that he can never overlook transgression. What! sinner, do you think God can by any means, and under any circumstances, fail to notice your sin? If he could, then you might find him neglecting the means of moral discipline. But if, on the contrary, you find him ever wakeful to the work of discipline, you may know that, this failing of its object, there is another kind of notice to be taken of sin.

Suppose a father should chasten his son with a grief that seemed to tear his very heart and deeply wound his spirit, but all is in vain; would not even you affirm that such a son ought to be punished, and much the more, for the pains his father has taken to save him, and for the wicked stubbornness that would not be subdued to love and duty? See that mother, wearied and worn; she has chastened her daughter, but it avails nothing; the deep agony of her heart is crushing her to the grave, and her soul weeps over the cruel abuse of a wayward daughter; now tell me, shall all of this stubbornness and abuse towards a faithful and fond mother be passed over, and not be heeded?

So, sinner, of all the things for which you deserve to be punished, this is the chief. God has taken so much pains to bless you; his very heart has been moved

to the centre of his being, and once and again he has cried out, "How can I give thee up?" And now, all effort and painstaking having failed, shall no account be made of the stubbornness and guilt which have frustrated the toil of infinite love?

That sickness which your Heavenly Father sent upon you did not reclaim you from your sins. Ah! it will cost you too much to abuse not only God's mercies, but his chastisements also. To your surprise, and sorrow too, you will find that God has not done all this for your good, that, when abused and resisted by you, it should go for nothing. You have not seen the end of these things yet. You came up from your sick-bed, did you? Yes. And then forgot all your sick-bed vows and solemn promises of amendment? Yes! And, on you went, in your sin, till you became tenfold more hardened than ever! Ah! you cannot afford to be thus chastised, and to have it all result in waxing worse and worse, and in becoming only the more ripe for perdition.

All your infirmities and all your sins; also the sins of those who live near you so that you can see the course of God's dealings with them; indeed, the whole history of sin in the universe so far as known to you, all conspire to heighten your responsibility and aggravate the guilt of your sin. For all these things serve to show you the real evil and wrong of sin; they serve to reveal God's hatred of sin, and to assure you that he must and will punish it. Both the good and the evil deeds of all the moral beings in the universe, so far as you can know them, have an important bearing upon your responsibilities as a moral agent, because, they affect the amount of your knowledge of sin and of God, and hence of your own personal duty.

I am aware that sinners are prone to overlook this fact. They often say, We are held responsible only for our own sins, and not for the sins of others; but mark! the sins of others increase your knowledge both of God and of duty, and hence increase your moral responsibility and heighten your guilt, if in the face of so much knowledge you still persist in sinning. The good and the evil of all beings within your knowledge serve to augment your responsibility. These things are continually pouring light on your mind. So, also, does the entire course of your own history and experience as a sinner under God's government. You cannot eat or drink, rise up or lie down, you can be nowhere, and can do nothing, without having a continual stream of influence poured upon you, which heightens your responsibility because it increases the knowledge of God, of sin, and of duty,

under which and against which you sin. All your religious privileges belong to the same class, and bear pre-eminently upon the point of your moral responsibility and consequent guilt. Did you ever own a Bible? Has some kind Christian friend given you a copy of that blessed Book? *Your own* Bible! You might read it at your pleasure. It is God's own message from heaven to your soul. But oh, how you have slighted it! Other friends have sent you messages and letters, but you have treated none of them so! You have always at least *read* their letters, and have commonly treated their expressed wishes with due respect. But you have insulted God by treating his letters with almost total neglect! Oh, what will that neglected Bible testify against you! Perhaps your mother gave it to you. Her careful hand laid if safely in your trunk when you prepared to leave the home of your childhood. God was in that mother's hand, and through it he placed a copy of his word under your eye, and threw on you a double responsibility to heed it well. You said then, "I am glad that I have got a Bible." So am I, if you use it well. If you study candidly its precepts and heed them in the fear of God, 'tis all well; but if not, all will go ill with you, and that neglected Bible will follow you up to the judgment, forecasting your doom and crying out, *Anathema!* ANATHEMA!! let the despiser of God's word be ANATHEMA, for ever!

And you know this would be only simple justice! You can see that it *ought* to be so!

REMARKS.

1. I said in the morning that all things work together for good to the Christian, and that ultimately, when he comes to see how all things have had this result, he will regret nothing he has ever done, although he may greatly blame himself for all his sins. It is often the case that Christians here learn lessons of deep experience under their sins. They are deeply affected when they see how God overrules even their sins for good to themselves and to others.

But nothing of this sort happens to sinners. They are not of those that love God, and they have no reason to expect that God will make all things work together for their good. Hence they must both blame themselves and also regret everything they have ever done. They must feel both self-blame and regret that they ever had a Bible; that they ever had a friend; that they ever had health; that they ever had existence! Alas, they will say, alas, that I was ever born! Alas, that I lived so long! Alas, that I ever had one mercy from God to abuse so guiltily!

Woe is me that I had a pious mother! Ten thousand woes on my guilty soul that God ever sent me his gospel! Ah me! how have I treasured up wrath against the day of wrath!

2. Sinners have never any good reasons for joy.

You recollect the seventy-third Psalm. The Psalmist had been struck with the fact that the wicked were so prosperous and so happy. It puzzled him sorely. For a long time he could not understand it, and was thereby thrown into great perplexity. But when he went in God's sanctuary, then he says, "I understood their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction." Let the sinner only see his own case in the light shed from God's word in his sanctuary, and he too will understand that he has no occasion for joy. He will see how insane are all his rejoicings. What! and shall he rejoice in that which will only work out his deeper damnation? Can any but an insane mind do this?

Some one of our children may be prosperous, but yet in sin. If so, he is only abusing the blessings God sends him, and surely this can be no matter of joy either to him or to his parents. He cannot afford to have any of these blessings to *use in sin!* Ah no! for he must pay for them at last in the bitterness of eternal yet unavailing regret. If you therefore have unconverted children, or if I have, we have no occasion for joy in them, however prosperous they may be.

3. Sinners procure this result to themselves. It all comes, sinners, from your own wickedness -- from your own voluntary and persistent impenitence and unbelief. If you would turn about and love God, all would be well for you. But if you will abuse his grace and reject his authority, all is wrong and all will work ill to your soul.

In a spirit not the most honest, you may say, Why did God give me existence at all? He knew how I should abuse it, and only bring a curse on myself and curse my own existence.

You ask such questions as these, perhaps, and yet you know how impious they are in their implications against your Maker! You ask, Why did God give me existence? That you might use it to his glory and to your own perfect blessedness. But you reply, What? when he knew how I should only curse myself by sin instead of blessing myself by holy obedience? Yes, certainly; none

the less so because of his foreknowledge of your course. Has God's knowledge of the course you would take at all lessened or changed your moral responsibility -- the perfect freeness of your choices -- the radical, essential guilt of your sin?

God gave you voluntary powers, that, on your own responsibility, you might use them for your own welfare. He gave you his Son, and in him an offered salvation, that you might lay hold of everlasting life. He gave you a Bible, that you might read it and become wise unto salvation. He gave you these and a thousand other blessings, that they might be improved, and certainly you do not need to be told that, if you will not improve them, you have no right to complain of God.

4. Sinners need not be stumbled by any calamities whatever which befall God's real children. A Christian is sick? Well, what of that? Is not the Saviour's arm all round about him? But he is going to die? Well, what of that? Is not heaven just before him, and his God with him all through the dark valley of the river of death? He is going to lose all his property, is he? What then? He has got no real property except God, for, long ago, his heart made choice of God for its portion for ever.

Sinners often talk as if they were troubled to see so many calamities befalling the people of God. Let them not trouble themselves about this matter. The Lord knoweth them that are his, and they shall never lack his constant care.

5. All events that transpire in this world or the next will only make the great gulf fixed between saints and sinners the deeper and the broader -- will only make the saints more holy and more happy, the sinners more sinful and more wretched. The widening space between them in character and in relations to God's throne will of necessity constitute a gulf which none can ever pass over.

6. What an infinite folly is it to judge of things only by their relations to this life! to feel and to think of them only in view of this narrow and limited relation! Looking at things in this light only, we could not rejoice in the Christian's case; we could not pronounce him happy because he has the Almighty God for his friend. Viewing things from such a standpoint of observation, we should find everything dark and perplexing. But in the light of God's sanctuary all comes out clear. See those political, money-making men, scrambling after power or wealth: suppose they get it -- what then? The more they get, so much the more have they to answer for; so much the deeper will their responsibilities, if not honestly met,

sink them in perdition. Christians, therefore, have never any reason to envy sinners for their earthly prosperity. If they are ever tempted to do so, let them go into the sanctuary; there shall they learn the sinner's awful end. Coming forth from the house of God, they will say:

"Now I'm convinced the Lord is kind

To men of heart sincere,

Yet once my foolish heart repined,

And bordered on despair.

"I grieved to see the wicked thrive,

And spoke with angry breath,

How pleasant and profane they live,

How peaceful is their death!'"

But having searched God's word, he sings:

"There, as in some prophetic glass,

I saw the sinner sit,

High mounted on a slippery place,

Beside a fiery pit.

"I heard the wretch profanely boast,

Till at thy frown he fell;

His honors in a dream were lost,

And he awoke in hell."

One of our texts affirms, "Their feet shall slide in due time, and the things that shall come upon them make haste." Another declares, "Their judgment now of a long time lingereth not and their damnation slumbereth not." "Sudden destruction cometh upon them, as pangs upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape."

7. God's conduct in all this is just and righteous altogether. Who can object because God holds the sinner responsible for the Bible he gives him, or for the existence with which he has endowed him? Dare you say or even think that God does wrong to hold you responsible for the Bible, for the Sabbath, for the gospel, and for all the knowledge of duty which he has placed within your reach? Is he not bound, by the eternal laws of right, to hold all his creatures responsible according to the measure of the blessings he has conferred upon them? Could his moral kingdom be safe on any other principle of administration? Would the holy beings around his throne endure any deviation from these eternally and intrinsically righteous principles? *Do you* not see for yourself, that if you persist in abusing his mercies, God will bring you to account, and *must* do it, or cease to be a righteous God? It were a mal-arrangement and a mal-administration, if God were to deviate at all from the principle of holding every moral agent to the strictest accountability for all his moral conduct, according to the light he has enjoyed.

How long, sinner, have you lived? During all these years, what have you done? How have you used your life up to this hour? Is it not time that you should pause and take an observation?

In the past-pages of my own personal history I can see where God summoned me to answer these solemn questions. I had spent all my early life in new settlements, had enjoyed only the most scanty means of religious instruction, had never heard a prayer in my father's house, yet one night I most vividly remember I lay a long time awake, and I asked myself, how old am I? How have I lived up to this hour? What have I done towards determining the future condition of my existence? These were questions I had never heard before; but God put them home to my soul in a way that made my flesh quiver and my bones quake. I had spent half my life -- for I looked then upon the age of forty as the limit of my earthly days; I had lived out half my life, yet what had I done for God or for my own eternal well-being?

Have you, sinner, ever taken such a reckoning? Sailing along unknown seas in the voyage of life, have you ever paused to take in sails, get out your instruments, and take your bearing? Have you ever stopped, as every wise mariner does, to get out your instruments on some fair, sunny day, to find where you are, and which way you must steer to gain the haven of peace and rest? Oh, some of you have never made one careful, thorough observation to find your

course and your actual position! The fair, sunny days God gives you, you are too reckless to improve for so needful a purpose. O sinner, there are fearful rocks of damnation close under your heel. The darkness of the tempest is gathering fast upon you; soon you will feel the mountain waves tossing your frail bark, and the storm-blast will howl through your shrouds to shriek the requiem of a lost spirit! How will the vivid lightnings gleam down your masts, and the thunders break in peals like the judgment trump!

Ah, sinner, why did you not take your observation before your bark made these rocks of damnation, and before the storm-king was out in his fearfullest terrors, to dash your soul upon the breakers of final ruin? How can you afford to live in such mad recklessness of your soul's well-being? How can you afford to live content in sin amid such perils of damnation? Oh, to think of your case! When I pass you in the streets, sometimes I rejoice in your joy, for you seem to be happy; but more often I weep, for I see you in your sins, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. Yes; here you are in your sins, getting an education, doing the very thing which, above all other things, must augment your responsibility and aggravate your guilt, if you will not repent. Ah, you cannot afford to live so! Dear youth, how can you afford to go to the judgment with all the heightened responsibility of an *educated sinner?* Why will you make your very existence, and all the mercies with which God has blessed this existence, a living and eternal curse?

It need not be so. You may change the whole current of your future destiny. It may be done by simply changing the current of your present life -- by simply giving your heart to God and your whole being to his service. Will you do this? How many times have I been called to decide this question! and, alas, called only in vain! Oh, come now, and make one thorough observation! See where you are and what is before you. And will you refuse to do a thing so reasonable? Ah, what a dark night is coming on! How will the dreadful tempest roar and howl around your miserable soul -- the tempest of divine wrath that must break on the head of the despiser of saving mercy!

And must you be thrust into prison, and not be released, till you have paid the uttermost farthing? Must the doom of the damned be your eternal portion? It will be if so you choose. "They, that hate me," saith the voice of offered mercy, "*love death*."

8. What a contrast is here! All things work for good to the saint. Although he

weeps along his pathway of life with mingled tears of penitence and joy, yet soon he passes beyond all his pains and trials. Up, up, he soars, high above all sorrow, high aloft from this vale of tears. But the sinner dances along, gaily laughing and sporting his way -- God calling, rebuking, and entreating; saints weeping in grief over his madness and his impending doom; all creation in agony for him, but he dashes on. See, mark the contrast! Note how it widens continually. Saints ascend upward, mounting up, up; but sinners descend, going down, down, along the sides of the pit, amid the wailings of eternal despair.

Do you say, Enough, enough, I have heard enough; you have said enough; I am persuaded, and I am ready to come; I will no more abuse my Saviour -- no longer slight his offered love? Come, then, you prodigal, come back to your Father's house! for there is bread enough and to spare, and you need not perish with hunger. Come back with your free-hearted confessions of folly and guilt! Come, and beg for a pittance of the crumbs that fall from his table! Now is the day and the hour of mercy -- now is the accepted time!

Need I press again on your attention the wide and *awful contrast* between saints and sinners? They live together here; the same roof shelters them; the same table spreads for them their daily bread; the same sun rises and pours its blaze of light and joy over all; the same clouds come freighted with the waters of summer, and distil their precious drops for all; but Oh! how unlike is the scene that lies beneath! Underneath the surface God marks in one a heart of gratitude and penitence; and in another a soul tainted with selfishness and mad upon its lusts and its idols. Of course the one must go up, up, rising in the perfection of its holy character; and the other down, down, sinking under the depraving influence of its own headstrong appetites and its will, opposed to God and goodness.

And where will be the end of these courses? You know full well. You have no need to know better than you do.

The fatal thing with you, O sinner, is that you don't make up your mind to do known duty! I thought I should, you say, but I did not. I half resolve, but fail to do it. Scores of precious opportunities you have let slip, and each one left you only the more hardened. One opportunity came and waited on you -- you were not ready to embrace it, and it passed away; another came and tarried -- then rose up and went its way; and yet another and another; and what shall be the end of these things? Satan loves to beguile you; and he it is who is playing this game with you, seducing you to delay till each and every opportunity shall have gone

past, hopelessly and for ever. Will you let him ruin your soul? You see his hand, winding his fatal chain about your neck; Oh, how long can you be quiet under this operation! How long will you consent to be led captive by Satan at his will, when you know his object is to plunge your soul quick into the depths of hell!

XIV. GOD HAS NO PLEASURE IN THE SINNER'S DEATH.

"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" -- Ezekiel 33:11.

IN discussing these words it will be important to consider,

I. WHAT THE DEATH SPOKEN OF IS NOT;

II. WHAT IT IS;

III. WHY GOD HAS NO PLEASURE IN IT;

IV. WHY HE DOES NOT PREVENT IT;

V. THE ONLY POSSIBLE WAY TO ESCAPE IT.

I. *What the death of a sinner is NOT*.

Manifestly this death *cannot* be merely the *death of the body*; for all will die this death, whether they turn to God or not, and whether they live a spiritual life or not. The righteous are as really and as much exposed to natural death as the wicked. But the death spoken of in the text is one which may be escaped by turning from one's wicked ways to obedience.

The death spoken of cannot *be spiritual*, or a state of sinfulness; for God represents them as being already in this state. They are now in sinful ways from which he entreats them to turn. But the death spoken of is prospective. God does not ask, *Why are ye dead? but, Why will ye die?*

II. *What the death of a sinner IS.*

Positively, the death spoken of must be the opposite of the life here referred to. This life cannot be natural life; for all, both saint and sinner, are conceived of as being alike in natural life. Of course, the life must be salvation -- eternal life -- that blessedness which saints enjoy in the favour and love of God, begun here, prolonged for ever hereafter. Now, if such be the life alluded to, the death, being in contrast with it, must be *eternal death*; the misery experienced by all God's enemies. As the life referred to here is not a mere state of existence, but a state of positive blessedness; so the death placed over against it cannot be

annihilation, the natural opposite of mere existence, but must be misery, the natural opposite, of blessedness.

These remarks must suffice on this point, it being one on which no rational doubt can exist.

III. *Why has God no pleasure in the sinner's death*.

A few days since, you may recollect, I preached a funeral sermon, to show that the death of saints is precious in God's sight. Their death is to him an event of deep interest. But the sinner's death is not so. Here is death in which God has no pleasure. He gives us his own solemn word, nay more, his *oath*, that he takes no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked. We are now to consider why.

1. The death of saints in which God takes a special interest is only the death of the body; but the death of the wicked is the death of both soul and body together. Both together are involved in misery and ruin. By this I do not mean that either is annihilated. The body, we know, is not annihilated at death: its constituent elements only change their chemical relations; but do not by any means cease to exist. There is no more reason to suppose the soul experiences annihilation, than that the body does. Indeed, there is no reason whatever for supposing that annihilation ever can be the lot of either soul or body. I was amazed to hear some of the Adventists maintain that the threatened death of the wicked is nothing but annihilation, for nothing could be more obvious than that this position of theirs utterly lacked all foundation either in Scripture or reason.

2. God has no pleasure in the sinner's death, because he is a moral being, and it is contrary to the nature of moral beings to delight in suffering for its own sake. To all moral beings happiness is intrinsically good, and unhappiness is intrinsically evil, and must be from the very constitution of moral beings. Hence unhappiness can never be a source of pleasure, in itself considered. The view of it as endured by others cannot be deemed a good by any moral being, for its own sake, and considered simply as misery, for the reason that it is what it is, misery and not happiness, the very constitution of a moral being demanding that happiness shall be held as the only good, and misery as intrinsically evil. Even Satan, with all his malignity against God, can never enjoy the sight any more than the endurance of misery, *for its own sake*. How much more must this be true of God! Selfishness may wickedly trample down the rights and happiness of others; but, yet, good to itself, and not misery to others, is its direct object. The consequent misery to

others will in its time react upon selfish beings with terrible vengeance, harrowing up their souls with the bitterest torture. It is in the very nature of selfishness and sin to accumulate the resources for its own torment, just as benevolence accumulates the means of its own blessedness; and the reason in both cases lies fixed in the changeless nature of moral beings. The selfish cannot enjoy evil-doing: let them try ever so much, for it is not in their nature as moral beings to enjoy misery. If it were, they might make a heaven of hell itself. But, as it is, their selfish attempts to wrest away other's good will cause misery first to others, and next, ultimately and eternally, to themselves. Sin must be its own tormentor. Neither the sight nor the infliction of misery can ever in itself beget happiness. The nature of all moral beings forbids it.

3. God cannot have pleasure in the sinner's death, because his *character* forbids it. God is not only by nature a moral agent, but he is in character a *good* moral agent -- a being of infinite benevolence. Hence he cannot delight in misery anywhere, for its own sake, and in view of its own nature. The sight of misery endured is always distressing to a benevolent being, in itself considered. He can acquiesce in it and tolerate its afflictions only when circumstances make it necessary as a means for a greater good. In such a case, he might truly say, I have no pleasure in their suffering.

So with God in regard to the sinner's death. Since he is purely and perfectly benevolent, it is contrary to his character that he should find pleasure in the misery of his creatures. Love desires evermore the happiness of all beings, and is from its very nature disposed to secure the highest possible degree of it. God pities the self-ruined sinner; never rejoices in his dreadful doom, for its own sake.

4. It must be that God regards the death of the sinner, viewed in itself, as a great evil. In its own nature it is an evil of the very greatest magnitude. No finite mind can begin to conceive how great and dreadful this evil is. It needs the sweep of an infinite mind to measure its length and breadth, its depth and its height. None other than the mind of a God can grasp its limitless dimensions, or measure its boundless magnitude. To his mind, therefore, the death of the sinner must appear an immensely great evil.

5. God can have no pleasure in the death of sinners, because it is a state in which he can wisely show them no more favour. Their relations to his government become such that he is constrained to debar them from all mercy and from all

good. Unmingled retribution must now take its course. Mercy has had its day; simple justice must henceforth have unimpeded exercise. So long as the wicked were in this world of probation, God took pleasure in showing them all the favours he wisely could, for it is always in his heart to bless the guiltiest as far as he consistently can; and he seeks to constrain the sinner by his mercies to turn from his sins. But when the sinner has murdered all his probation-time and used up all his mercies upon his lusts, he passes away to another state unknown to Mercy. There he can have not one drop of water to cool his tongue. There his prayers to Father Abraham will be utterly unavailing. On all these points, the account given us by Jesus Christ himself of the rich man and Lazarus is most full and explicit. Whatever else this account teaches or does not teach, one thing is made plain by it; namely, that God finds it necessary to refuse the least favour to sinners in hell. "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things;" thou hast had them all, and there are no more to be given. Not so much as one drop of water is left for the lost sinner in hell. He begs for this smallest favour, but begs in vain. How dreadful this fact! The lost sinner is in such relations to God that God is compelled to restrain himself from giving him one drop of water. Even infinite benevolence cannot give so small a favour as this.

Now it is plain that a God of love can have no pleasure in being brought into such a position as this. He took the greatest pleasure in bestowing good upon even the sinner, so long as he wisely could. It was his happiness to send his rain on the just and on the unjust; but when the dreaded hour at last came, and God, as the great executive magistrate of the universe, was compelled to cut down the guilty sinner and show his own eternal abhorrence of sin, then he could no longer show the sinner the least mercy. This removing the sinner beyond the range of mercy is a thing in which, considered by itself, God can have no pleasure. The same is true of all benevolent beings.

It is remarkable to see how earnestly God repels the slander upon him of taking pleasure in the sinner's death. The Jews in Ezekiel's time went so far as to use the proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." The Most High solemnly rebukes his people for this slander; protests his own innocence of the implied charge, and finally closes with the explicit averment, "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye" (Ezek. 18:2, 32). So also, in our text, he takes his solemn oath, and, since he could swear by no greater, he swears by himself. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked."

Therefore let no sinner seek to throw the blame of his own ruin off from himself and upon his Maker. No slander could be more groundless or more foul.

6. Another reason still is that when sinners have outlived their probation and are cut off in their sins, their depravity will be thenceforward unrestrained. How shocking it must be to the pure and holy God to see his creatures giving themselves up to utter and unrestrained depravity -- to see them giving boundless scope to the most odious and horrible rebellion! The book of Revelation speaks of the wicked, under God's punitive judgments, as "gnawing their tongues for pain, and blaspheming the God of heaven because of their pains and of their sores, and yet repenting not of their deeds." Their condition amid the dread realities of hell will not reform them; nay, so far from this, it will only drive them to desperation, and in the utter desperateness of their depraved hearts, they will break out in most horrid blasphemies. Oh, how will sinners damn themselves to a deeper and still deeper damnation What an unutterable state of depravity will hell be when sin takes its ample, unimpeded course, and has a whole eternity in which to range and ripen, and develop its horrid spirit and terrible tendencies! No wonder that God can take no pleasure in such a world as that.

In that world the sufferings of the wicked will be unmitigated. Here, although their depravity is great, nay, even total, yet so many restraints are upon them that many of them appear quite respectably among their fellow-beings. They are induced to conform outwardly to the rules of good society. Consequently in this world they enjoy many comforts, and ordinarily they have an ample supply for their physical wants. The common pleasures of society, of earthly friendships and relationships, fall to their lot. Consequently they are by no means so miserable as they might be. Indeed, they are often wont to think themselves quite happy. And they do doubtless have a sort of feverish enjoyment, poor enough at best, as the portion of the human soul, yet vastly unlike that dreadful state in which every source of enjoyment shall be utterly cut off. There shall be gnawing desire, but no gratification; pressing want, but no supply; no employment but groans, and sighs, and such developments of their depravity as bring their own torturing punishment with them. If the Bible had said nothing about their case, we might yet know that they must be purely and utterly miserable; for what source of happiness can remain to them in all the realms of nature, or in all the universe of God? Here they manage to get some good because God is sparing them to give them space to repent, and is trying them, if so be he may subdue

their hearts by his love; but when they have abused all this good till God can bestow it no longer, what shall remain then? When death shall have smitten their last pleasure, where are they?

IV. *Why God does not prevent the death of sinners.*

But it is time that we should ask, *Why does not God prevent the death of the wicked?* If he takes no pleasure in it, why should he suffer it to be?

1. You are aware that men have often inferred from God's benevolence that he will not suffer the wicked to be lost. But who has any right to infer this? How does it appear that benevolence cannot inflict a lesser evil for the sake of preventing a greater? Who can prove it unwise for God to create beings and suffer them to continue their existence, although they may sin -- yes, may sin, despite of any power which God can wisely use to prevent it? That is, for the question resolves itself into this, who can prove that, on the whole, more evil than good must result from the existence of a sinning race of moral agents? Who can show that it may not be indefinitely better to have such a race with all the attendant results than not to have created them, or having created them to establish a government so different from the present as would have prevented it?

But if a God of infinite wisdom and love might give existence to a race who could and should sin, then surely it is no marvel that he should punish them. Indeed, the only marvel is that he should ever do otherwise than punish -- should ever pardon. Pardon, not punishment, is the strange thing. Revelation apart, who could ever infer rationally that God would pardon one sinner? From what data could man infer it? The wisest sinners that have ever lived have made the inference that God could save none. They have seen that God is a moral governor, and hence cannot be pleased with sinners. Hence they inferred, and most reasonably too, that he can save none. How could they have made any other rational inference without the aid of revelation?

2. God does not prevent the death of the wicked, for the good reason that he cannot wisely do it. Some are shocked at this remark; but why should they be? for what God himself says on this subject most surely implies that he cannot wisely prevent the sinner's death. He solemnly avers that he has no pleasure in it, and plainly implies that it is in itself an unpleasant and undesirable thing. If so, then he would prevent it if he wisely could. He says to sinners, "Turn ye, for why will ye die?" implying that he is grieved that they should die, and also that their

own turning is the only means of preventing so dreadful a doom. No language could imply more plainly that he cannot and will not do himself what he commands and exhorts them to do.

To the same purpose he says again, "What could I have done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" Does not this forcibly imply that God could not do more to secure holiness and save from hell than he actually had done? Now it should be well considered that what God could not do wisely to save sinners, he could not do at all without sinning. There is no middle course between acting wisely and sinning. For God to act otherwise than with wisdom must be wrong.

3. God could not have prevented their destruction by refusing to create them. Many ask, Why did God create men if he knew they would sin? The answer is, he could not forbear to create without himself sinning. He saw it would be wise to create moral agents who would sin, and some of whom would be lost; and how could he act other than wisely without for ever condemning himself for wrong-doing? If God has ever in any instance acted unwisely, it has not been in his case, as sometimes in ours, through ignorance. No; there never can be in his case this vindication for acting unwisely. If God in any case does more or less than infinite wisdom dictates, he cannot but know it, and cannot but regard it as sin.

Now, therefore, if wisdom dictated the creation of the beings who would become wicked, God could not forbear to create, without personal sin; nay, could not forbear, without absolute self-ruin! Do we think it a small matter that God should sin? Then we have not yet begun to take right views of the subject. For God to sin would be to lose his own self-respect -- destroy his own peace and blessedness -- unfit himself either to enjoy his own character and works, or to govern his universe.

4. God could not wisely have done more than he has done for the sinner's salvation; He has all along done all that infinite wisdom has demanded. To have done more or other at any moment would have been sin. And who does not see that it must be a far less evil for God to suffer moral agents to sin than to take himself any course which is sinful? If either God or his creatures must be ruined by sin, let it be the sinner, and not God. It is infinitely better that God should suffer the sinner to ruin himself than suffer himself to be ruined. By so much the more is this true because the ruin of God by his own sinning would inevitably

involve the ruin of the whole universe, a calamity the magnitude of which defies all our comprehension.

We should never lose sight of the great truth that God always acts considerately and wisely. If he creates moral agents who become sinners, he does it wisely, following evermore the dictates of his intelligence and of his benevolence. It is plain that God could not wisely abridge the liberty of moral agents, nor indeed could he save them, even if he should, for the very idea of the salvation of a moral agent implies his own voluntary turning from sin. None but moral agents can have salvation from sin and from hell; the existence of moral beings involves a moral government over them, and over them *as moral beings*, which is the same thing as to say, that they must have the liberty of free voluntary action. If, therefore, God would have a moral government, he must let it have scope, and meet the results, be they what they may. I do not mean that he must preclude himself from throwing in moral influences to affect their action; but I do mean that their liberty of moral action must not be abridged. His interposing influences must ever more be of a moral, and not of a physical or compulsory nature.

I have said that God acts wisely, and cannot act otherwise. I mean this in its fullest extent. It is always true. At every hour and moment of each sinner's existence God could truly say, What could I have done more for thee that I have not done? The sinner may misapprehend the case, and may suppose that God might do, or might have done more; but God makes no mistakes; God never misapprehends the real facts of the case.

5. God cannot save men without their concurrence in the nature of the case, they could not be holy without their own concurrence; how, then, could they be happy without it? Being constituted moral agents, and made subjects of moral government, it must be in every point of view impossible to save them unless they will turn from their sins. God's government must remain moral, and hence he can do nothing inconsistent with its moral nature. If, then, God works upon the sinner by means of his providence and his spirit, to the utmost extent he wisely can, and all in vain, there remains nothing more which, as a moral governor, he can do to save him.

6. Another reason why God does not prevent the death of the wicked is that he regards it as a less evil than to interpose in any way possible to himself, to save them. If they would turn under such influences as he can wisely use, he would

rejoice; but he is already going to the utmost limit of his discretion, and how can he go farther? Sooner than go farther, he would let ten thousand worlds go to ruin. Who can find fault with him for this? Who can blame the all-wise God for following the dictates of his own wisdom? If he should in any single particular deviate from his own sense of propriety and from his own judgment of what is best for the universe, how dreadful the consequences! Perhaps we are not wont to consider that there are bounds beyond which God cannot go, and beyond which he never does go. These bounds are always ascertained by Infinite Wisdom. They have their foundation in the nature of moral agents, and in the exigencies of God's vast government. Who but God himself can decide how long he can safely bear with a lingering, self-hardening sinner? and how far he can wisely go in the strivings of his Spirit, and in the favouring arrangements of his providence?

This view of the case is not only in accordance with the Bible, but is inferred irresistibly from the known attributes of God. Some of you may ask, How does it appear that God does as much as he can for the good of each sinner? I answer, We all know that God is a good and not a wicked being. He is moreover a moral agent, possessing attributes of mind and heart of which our own are a copy, for we were made in the image of God. Of course when we speak of God as a good being, we may, nay, we *must*, reason by analogy drawn from other good beings. If we are good men, we shall of course seek to prevent all possible evil and produce all possible good. This is necessarily implied in our being good men.

Now what is implied in God's being good? That he consecrates himself to the good of being. Goodness in God implies that he is all awake to prevent all mischief he wisely can, and secure all the good he wisely can. We know intuitively that if he is a moral agent as we are; if he has a conscience as we have; if he has moreover a good heart, he will evermore do all he wisely can both to prevent evil and produce good.

7. Yet another reason is that, although the evil of the sinner's death is great, yet he can make a good use of it. He can overrule it for important good to others and to various interests in his kingdom. The sufferings of the wicked may be in themselves a very great evil; yet God can bring those sufferings into such relations to his government, and can make them so useful in their influence on other beings, that the good results become in his mind a sort of compensation for the evil, so that, on the whole, he may see it wise to admit sin with all its results,

rather than exclude it by any means possible to himself.

V. *The only possible way to escape the sinner's death*.

We may now see that the *only possible way* in which the *sinner's death can be avoided*, is for the sinner himself to turn from his evil ways and live. The sinner need not look for God to change the policy of his government. He need not expect God to pardon sin without the sinner's repentance and the sinner's faith in Christ. He need not wait for some other name than that of Jesus given among men, whereby they may be saved, or for any other mode in which the sinner may avail himself of that name. God's government being what it is, repentance and faith in Jesus Christ are natural and necessary means of the sinner's salvation. He might as well ask Jehovah to come down from his throne, as ask him to do anything more or anything different from what he is doing to save sinners. The sinner, therefore, who would be saved, must meet Jehovah's own revealed conditions.

REMARKS.

1. The goodness of God is really no encouragement to those who continue in sin. Hear the rebuke given by the Psalmist, "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God endureth continually." Why should you be proud of mischief? Know thou that God is good; and a good God is terrible to the wicked.

I am often amazed to hear persons talk as if the goodness of God afforded some security to those who live in sin. Some of you may be resting on this assumption. But how is this? If the goodness of God has hitherto prevented his using such means as have actually saved you from sin, how can you know but it may likewise prevent his saving you from hell? God has been good all along; but you are yet in sin. If his goodness has not stopped your sinning, how can you hope it will prevent your suffering? If his goodness has not availed to secure your conversion under the most favourable circumstances which even infinite love could arrange, how can you hope it will save you without your being converted? How can you venture on the assumption that God will recede from his ground, and since you will not come to his terms, he will come to yours? Suppose you that goodness and wisdom will ever do this?

It may be that you have not duly estimated the fact that God is immutable --

always good, and always having the same sort of goodness. If then his goodness has not prevented your sinning, and your suffering too, in this world; if all the efforts which goodness has been continually putting forth have hitherto failed, how can you infer that the same goodness may not fail hereafter? Especially when he assures you that now is the accepted time, and now his day of salvation? If his goodness cannot arrest you in your course of sin, in the most favouring hour, how can you hope it will arrest you from going straight down to hell? What can you find either in the Bible or out of the Bible to warrant such an inference as that of your salvation from the goodness of God?

One thing you may certainly know to be fact. God has been always as good as he is now, or as he ever will be. Yet he has created this world; it has fallen into sin; He has visited it with many and sore judgments and much suffering for its sins; has declared that he will send every sinner to hell who will not turn from his evil ways, and has done all he wisely could to make you believe it. And now, can you rationally infer from God's goodness, that you, as a sinner, have no hell to fear? Ah, no, sinner, NO. You are moving on fast through the only period of your existence in which salvation is possible; you cannot arrest your progress towards the grave; you can never change the course of God's government towards sinners. God is too good to suffer any sinner to triumph over justice, or to subvert his own throne.

2. The goodness of God is not the security of the impenitent sinner's salvation, but the guarantee of his damnation. Sinners know this. They are not afraid of God because they think him wicked, but because they think him good, and dread the consequences of his goodness. What sinner ever feared injustice from God? Not one. Their fear is that God will deal with them as they deserve. Not without reason is it that they fear his goodness and his justice. These are the very qualities in his character which they have to fear; just as they fear good men and the best men most, not because they are bad men, but because they are good men.

3. The death of the wicked is not inconsistent with God's happiness. I have heard persons say that they never could be happy even in heaven, if they knew that any of their own friends or relatives were in hell; and they seem to wonder how God can be happy while he knows that sinners are in hell. The reason why God will not be unhappy is that he will have the eternal consciousness of having himself done right, and of not being in any sense or degree to blame for the death of the

wicked. When the smoke of their torments shall go up for ever and ever, his consciousness will for ever affirm, No blood of theirs is on my raiment. With this consciousness God need not be unhappy in the sinner's eternal death.

4. God will have the eternal consciousness of having laid himself out to the utmost to save sinners. He knows that he has gone to the very verge of propriety, just as far as he wisely could, at every successive step in their course through a life of sin to their eternal death. What a satisfaction that must be, to such a mind as his, to be able to say, "What could I have done more to my vineyard that I have not done" in it? It is no fault of mine that when I looked for it to bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes, fit only for burning.

In this view of the case it is easy to see that God will be content with having done the best thing he could do. Conscious of this, he will be satisfied, and will have no occasion to wish that he had been more than infinite, or to regret in any respect that he has not done more or better than he has.

He will be well satisfied, on the whole, with all the results of all he has done. He will indeed see that the misery of the wicked is, as viewed in itself, a great and almost infinite evil; but when all the results are considered, he will be satisfied. For, it should be considered, God had foreseen all these results. They do not break upon him by surprise. He did not commence a plan with which he should be, in its development, dissatisfied. He foresaw all the evils incidental to his plan -- all the sin, and all the suffering consequent upon sinning. In full view of all, he asked himself, Shall I be satisfied with these results? He did not go forward without making up his mind that this course was, on the whole, altogether wise and good. Hence the evils which are to be developed in the sinner's death *are not new to him*. They do not break forth suddenly upon him, so as to embarrass his movements and turn him aside from his course. By no means. Right onward move his eternal counsels, as certain as his own existence. What infinite wisdom has devised, infinite power will execute. God never can lack the necessary firmness to do the very best thing in the best way.

These results, therefore, do not interfere at all with the happiness of God. The death of the sinner may be in itself a very great evil, and yet God sees that, on the whole, taking all results into view, he has the best of reasons to be satisfied with his own plan, and with all that he has himself done in its execution. He will be satisfied with the results as a whole, although there may be things connected with it which are in themselves to be regretted.

5. Again, the death of the wicked will not be inconsistent with the happiness of heaven. Persons have often said that they could not be happy in heaven if they knew the wicked were in hell. Some of you may have thought so; but why? Are you a great deal better than God? Are you more benevolent or more wise than God is? Suppose you stand on the shore and you see a ship in the offing beating hard against a dreadful storm, and laden with precious human lives. You see their signals of distress; ah, you can even hear their shrieks and cries for help, and in your inmost soul you feel that you would save them all if you could. No doubt you would. God has the power to do it, but yet he lets that noble ship strike the breakers! You would have saved them; but are you therefore better than God? No; the reason why your course differs from God's course in the matter is that you are not so good and not so wise as he. If you were as benevolent as he, you would act as he does.

But with your short vision of results, it would fill you with great anguish to see a ship's crew and passengers all dash upon the dreadful rocks and go to the bottom. Yet God can look calmly on, and trace the whole course of the dreadful calamity, satisfied that all shall be well in the end.

When saints reach heaven they will have more confidence in God than many people have now. They will see more than they do now, and will have indefinitely more confidence in the wisdom of what they cannot see. It will then appear plain to them that they have the same reason for being happy in all the results of moral government that God has. They will begin to see these results as they have never done before. With enlarged views they will see most clearly that God has done right, perfectly and infinitely right. Oh, how their minds will be eternally solemnised by a view of hell! What a spectacle! What could make more solemn impressions of the fearfulness of sin, and of the firmness that prevails for ever in the counsels of Jehovah! I have sometimes been greatly edified by seeing how Christians have borne the loss of friends dying in their sins. For a long time I could not understand this, and was greatly stumbled to conceive how Christians could be reconciled to such a trial. Is it stupidity, said I to myself, or is it unbelief? Subsequent reflection, however, and observation, showed that it was neither. I saw how they might be happy in God, confiding in his wisdom and love. I no more suppose that heaven will be unhappy because of their vision of hell, than I suppose a virtuous community would be in seeing a man punished who was bent upon their ruin. Suppose there were in this

community a man full of all mischief, a child of the devil, reckless of law and right, periling and even taking life, whenever excited passion maddened him to the deed; suppose this man seized, convicted, and shut up in state's prison, or even suppose him to be hung: you see it, and you say, This is in itself a great evil, but, in view of all the results, you would say, *Amen*. Better that the guilty wretch should suffer as he deserves, than that society should be broken up, other lives be destroyed, and an evil vastly greater than one man's death be done.

Now if in this world you may be brought to acquiesce in condign punishment brought upon the guilty, how much more so in the future world! There we shall see that their case is hopeless; that nothing more could be done wisely to save them; that they forced their way down to hell in full view of Calvary, despite of the tenderest entreaties and the most affecting invitations; then we shall see that nothing remained but for God to shut them up in the state's prison of the universe!

Persons sometimes say, Oh! if my relatives, my husband, or my children must go to hell, I never can be reconciled with God's doings, *never*, NEVER! I never can be happy in heaven myself and see them in hell! What! Do you say to God, You may send anybody else's children to hell if you please, *but spare mine?* All this will have passed away if you ever reach heaven. There God's friends are my friends, and God's enemies are my enemies, have only one question to ask there, is he a friend of God, or is he an enemy? All these distinctions about self and self's friends, or self's children, will then have vanished for ever away. Does that pious mother think now that she could not be happy to see her own son sent to hell? Once in heaven, or even once fitted for heaven, your soul will rest calmly in God, sinking down sweetly into his will, and rejoicing that he never does, and never can do, otherwise than right.

6. But we must revert to the exhortation in our text. God says to each sinner, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" Many sinners in this house have continued long in sin, expecting God to do something more than he has yet done, and indeed enough to save them; but *will he?* Do you *know* that he will? How do you know that he will? All this time, while you have been waiting for him, he has been waiting for you. He has come to you by all his servants, rising up early and sending them, saying, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" This, you will observe, assumes that you are bent on your own death, and that you act as if you thought yourselves to have good reasons for choosing

death. Your God asks to know what those reasons are. He tells you most solemnly that you need not die because he wants to have you, or because he has any pleasure at all in your death; nor because any one else -- unless it be Satan -- wants to have you die. No; if you have reasons they must *be your own*, and God asks you what they are. Now go home and ask yourself what they are. Press home to your own heart this question, put to you by your Maker, *Why will ye die?* Take your pen and write the reasons down, for you may have occasion enough to review them in the coming years and ages of your existence. Then write them down. I should like to know what they are, and it might be of use to yourself to study them more attentively than you have been wont to do. You will do well to write them all out fully, so that your own mind can measure them, and weigh them, and estimate soberly their real value. Won't you do this? Do it seriously, in the stillness and solitude of your own chamber; write them all down; get upon your knees and spread them out before God.

Say, Lord, thou hast put this question to me, "Why wilt thou die?" Here is the answer. Lord, it is because thou hast no mercy on sinners. It is because thou hast done nothing to save me. Because I can't help going on in my sins. Because I can't repent and can't believe.

But stop, sinner, read this over again before God. Is there a word of truth in all you have written? Will it stand the test of even your own conscience? Will it bear to come before your Maker? Can it be of any use to you to "deny the Lord that bought you," and "make God a liar" to his very face in contempt of his own solemn oath?

XV. THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried: and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he, is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

"Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." -- Luke 16:19-31.

A PARABLE is a little anecdote or a case of supposed history, designed to illustrate some truth. A simple and striking mode of illustration -- it makes no attempt at reasoning; indeed, it takes the place of all reasoning by at once revealing truth to the mind. In general, parables *assume* certain truths -- a thing which they have an ample right to do, for some truths need no proof, and in other cases a teacher may speak from his perfect knowledge, and in such a case, there can be no reason for demanding that he stop to prove all he asserts.

In the case of parables it is often interesting to notice what truths they do assume. This is especially true of the parables of Christ; for none were ever more rich by virtue both of the truths directly taught and also by virtue of the truths

they assume. I may also remark here that truths are taught in Christ's parables both directly and incidentally. Some one great truth is the leading object of the illustration, yet other truths of the highest importance may be taught incidentally, not being embraced in his direct design.

The passage which I have read to you this morning is probably a parable, though not distinctly affirmed to be so. The nature of the case seems to show this, although these very circumstances might have all actually occurred in fact and in the same order as here related.

In discussing the passage, I propose,

I. TO NOTICE SOME TRUTHS THAT ARE ASSUMED IN IT;

II. TO PRESENT SOME THAT ARE INTENTIONALLY TAUGHT.

I. *Truths that are assumed by the story*.

1. Christ assumes in this passage the direct *opposite of annihilation*. He assumes that men are *not* annihilated at death, nor indeed ever. For he speaks of things that take place immediately after death. The men who lived on earth live beyond death, and receive according to the things they have done here in the body. It was no part of his direct object *to affirm* this doctrine; yet his statements imply it. Being himself *the Great Teacher*, it is not without reason that he should assume the fundamental truths that pertain to man's future existence under God's moral government.

2. He assumes that the state into which both good and bad men pass at death is one of real and intense *consciousness*. This of course denies the assumption that this state is an unconscious one. You are aware that some do not hold to annihilation, yet hold to unconsciousness in the intermediate state between death and the resurrection. This doctrine, whether applied to saints or sinners, is entirely set aside by our Saviour's teachings in this narrative.

3. He assumes that the righteous and the wicked recognise each other after death. The rich man knew both Abraham and Lazarus. Abraham knew him. They all respectively knew each other. The statements represent the colloquy to have been held between the rich man and Abraham. Abraham, though long since in heaven, knew both this rich man and Lazarus. It was not our Lord's design directly to affirm this, yet he obviously implies it.

4. It is also assumed that they are acquainted with each other's state and history. All these matters were entirely familiar to their minds.

5. It is fully assumed that at death the righteous go immediately to a state of bliss and the wicked to a place of torment. This lies out undeniably on the face of the passage.

II. *The truths distinctly and directly taught in this passage*.

1. That at death angels conduct the righteous to their place of blessedness. It is expressly said of Lazarus that he was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. Dogs were his companions here up to his death: angels immediately thereafter. When the dogs could minister to his wants no longer, angels stepped in and took his case in charge. They bore him away to the home of the blessed.

We may infer that this is the common employment of angels. Paul in Hebrews i. 12 strengthens this position, in his question, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

2. Saints after death are sensible of no want. They have nothing left to desire. They are sensible of wanting nothing that can be needful to their highest happiness. In this life they may have had their cup filled with bitterest grief; but at death, this cup is removed for ever away, and quite another cup is placed to their lips for ever. Lazarus had his evil things in this world; poverty, pain, *sores*, and want were his portion here; but, after death, he knew these things no more at all. They passed away for ever.

3. On the other hand, sinners after death are full of want, and have no good at all. The rich man asked for only the very smallest favour. He *had* fared sumptuously every day; but now he is reduced so low he can only beg for one drop of water to cool his tongue.

He asks for only so much as might adhere to the tip of one's finger when taken from the water. You have seen persons lie under a burning fever -- prostrate, parched, can't say a word, can only beckon for water -- water -- one drop to cool their burning tongue. See the man dying; he tries to move a little, towards the water; ah, he fails; he sinks back in his bed for the last time, and the burning fever has used up all his strength. You who have suffered from fever know what this means to have a consuming fire shut up within you. Here mark, the Great Teacher makes the rich man cry out, "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of

his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." Why did he not ask for an ocean of water, or a pail-full at least, or a pitcher-full? Why restrict himself to the least drop? Plainly he knew himself to be placed *beyond all good*. He knew this was the utmost he could ask, and even this is denied him! What could our Lord have designed but to teach this? How irresistibly is this taught and with what overpowering force! What remarkable facts are these! How obviously and how forcibly is the truth taught here that saints at death pass into a state all joyful, but the wicked into one of unutterable torment!

4. We learn the state of mind in which the wicked are. This man asks for only the very slightest mitigation. He says not one word about *Pardon*; this he knows to be impossible. How small the boon he dares to ask! How very small, if he could have had it, would have been the boon of one small drop of water on a tongue tormented in flame. Yet he does not dare to ask for anything beyond this; nor even this of God! He knew and he most deeply felt that he had cast off God, and God in turn had cast off him. He could not think of speaking to God. He could venture to speak only to Abraham; and this solitary Bible case of prayer to saints in heaven surely affords no very plausible foundation for the Romish practice. This rich man had not the least hope of release from his woe. He did not ask so great a boon as this. Deep in his soul he felt that such a request was for ever precluded.

It is remarkable, too, that, though the boon he did ask was so trifling and his need so great, yet even this pittance was denied him. Abraham gave him plainly to understand that this was impossible. Son, said he, remember that thou in thy lifetime hast received thy good things; thou hast had thine all; there are no more for thee to enjoy!

5. Besides this, there is a great gulf fixed -- parting for ever the saved from the damned: we cannot go to you if we would; you cannot come to us, however much you may desire it. Most plainly does Christ teach in this representation that the state of both the righteous and the wicked is fixed, fixed for ever, and for ever changeless. There can be no passage open, therefore, as some would fain have it, from one world to the other. They who are in heaven can never get to hell to help the suffering ones there if they would; and, on the other hand, the miserable in hell can never get to heaven. What less than this could the Saviour have intended to teach that each class enter at death upon another state which is to each alike unchangeable? The righteous cannot pass the great gulf to hell; the

wicked cannot pass it to heaven. Once heaven's gate was open to even the sinner on his repentance. Now it is open to him no more. He has passed away from the world where his moral state can be changed. He has entered on one where no change can reach him any more at all for ever.

6. The wicked dread to have their friends come to them in this place of torment. You see this feeling most distinctly manifested in this parable. The reason of the feeling is obvious. They are still human beings, and therefore it can be no joy to them to have their earthly friends come into their place of woe. They have human feelings. They know they can look for no alleviation of their own woe from the presence of their friends. They know that if those friends come there as they did they can never escape; therefore they beg that those friends may never come. Therefore this rich man prays that Abraham would send Lazarus to his five brethren, to testify to them, lest they also come into that place of torment

7. The state of mind that rejects the Bible would reject any testimony that could be given. This is plainly taught here, and can be proved. It can be proved that the testimony of one who should rise from the dead is no better or stronger than that of the Bible. Paul said he had been caught up to the third heaven, but men would not believe him. Or take the case of Lazarus, raised beyond all question from the dead. We are not told what he taught, nor is it said that his instructions made any special impressions on the living unbelievers of that generation. Those of you who have read the history of William Tennant, a co-labourer with Whitfield and Edwards, know how he apparently died; how after death he went to heaven; how he, too, like Paul, saw there unspeakable things which no man could utter; how he returned again, and lived several years as one who had seen the glories of heaven; but was this stronger evidence than the Bible itself? Did it surpass in strength of demonstration the teachings of Moses and of the prophets? Yet more, did it surpass the force and evidence with which Jesus spake, and also his apostles? No, verily. When unbelief has taken possession of the mind, you may pile miracle on miracle; men will not believe it. Suppose ever so many should rise from the dead. Men who reject the Bible would not believe their testimony. They would insist either that they had not been really dead, or that, if they had been, they did not bring back a reliable report from that other country. They would make a thousand objections, as they do now against the Bible, and with much more plausibility then than now. Now, they only know their objections are really unfounded; then they would have more plausible objections to make, and would be sure to give them credit enough to refuse to repent under their

teachings. They would not be persuaded even then.

8. The estimation in which God holds men may not be learned from their outward circumstances. His favour cannot be inferred from the trappings of wealth; nor is it precluded by any amount of poverty. These external things neither prove nor disprove God's approbation of the hearts and the life of men.

9. The righteous need not envy rich sinners. Lazarus did not envy the rich man. He saw that he was petted for his great wealth, but Lazarus pitied rather than envied him. He doubtless understood that this man was having his good things in this world. So good men, if they have faith, understand that those rich and wicked men are receiving all their good things in this world; therefore are far from being objects of envy.

10. The former poverty of the righteous poor will give a keener relish to the joys of heaven. Think of the abject poverty of this, man wandering about with no home, no place even to lay his head. So multitudes in Eastern countries may be seen lying around the city walls like the swine of the streets. I saw them in Malta when I was there, and in Sicily also. They had no home to go to, no resources against a sick or stormy day. So Lazarus lived; and it was from such a life and such scenes that he was transferred to the royal palace of Jehovah. Take the case of some poor beggar lying helpless outside the palace-walls of Queen Victoria. Suppose him suddenly taken up and exalted to the highest honours of the palace itself. How would his joy intoxicate his brain -- too much for flesh and blood to bear! So poor saints passing from the dunghill on earth to the golden palaces of heaven. It is well they lose their nerves in the change, for surely nerves of flesh could not bear so great a change. See Lazarus, sick and sore, perhaps putrid, licked by dogs; but he reached at length the crisis of his sorrows, and all suddenly the mortal coil drops, and his spirit takes wings -- angels receive him; he soars away, and heaven opens wide its gates of pearl to make him welcome! Sometimes when I have stood and seen the Christian die -- have seen him struggle and pant and gasp and pass away, I have said, What a wonderful change is this! See how that eye grows glassy and dark; then it closes; it sees no more of earth, but all suddenly it opens on the glories of the upper world, to be closed no more for ever!

11. But to have the luxuries of this life superseded by the poverty and woe of hell -- how awful! This rich man had royal wealth. We are told that he fared sumptuously every day -- not only on special occasions, but every day! Every

day, too, he was clad in purple and fine linen; but now how wonderful the contrast!

Nothing is said of the burial of Lazarus; perhaps he had none worth noticing; but this man had a funeral. It was a noticeable fact. Perhaps thousands gathered round his remains to do him honour -- but where is he? Lifting up his eyes in hell, being in torments! What a change! From his table and his palace, to hell! Lazarus passed from his sores and beggary to heaven; the rich man, from his pomp and pride and feasting, to hell. As the great poverty of Lazarus, so set off in contrast with heaven, must have given great edge and keenness to the joys of that world, so, on the reverse scale, how dreadful the contrast which this rich man experienced!

If we always get clearer and stronger views by contrast, surely we have a picture drawn here that is adapted to teach us awful truth and force it home on the soul with telling power.

12. If it be true that angels convey saints to heaven, as we are taught both here and elsewhere in God's word, then it is not irrational to suppose that what many saints say in their dying hours of the things they see, is strictly true. Gathering darkness clouds the senses, and the mind becomes greatly spiritual, as their looks plainly show. Those looks -- the eye, the countenance, the melting whisper, these tell the story better than any words can do it; indeed, no words can describe those *looks* -- no language can paint what you can stand by and see and hear -- a peace so deep and so divine; this shows that the soul is *almost* in heaven. In all ages it has been common for some dying saints to hear music which they supposed to be of heaven, and to see angels near and around them. With eyes that see what others cannot see, they recognise their attending angels, as already come. "Don't *you* hear that music?" say they. "Don't you see those shinning ones? they come, they come!" But attending friends are yet too carnal to see such objects and to hear such sounds; for it is the mind, and not the body, that has eyes. It is the mind that sees, and not the body. No doubt, in such cases, they do really see angelic forms and hear angelic voices. The Bible says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." How gloriously do these closing scenes illustrate this truth!

13. If this be true of saints, then doubtless wicked spirits are allowed to drag the wicked down from their dying beds to hell. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that they, too, really see awful shapes and hear dreadful sounds. "Who is that

weeping and wailing? Did I not hear a groan? Is there not some one weeping as if in awful agony? Oh, that awful thing! take him away, *take him away!* He will seize me and drag me down; take him away, *away!"*

So the wicked are sometimes affected in their dying moments. There is no good reason to doubt that these objects seen and sounds heard, by saints and sinners in their last earthly moments, are realities. You who have read Dr. Nelson's book on infidelity cannot but have noticed especially what he says of the experience of persons near death. These things passed under his observation chiefly while he was a physician, and while yet an infidel himself. Dying sinners would cry out, "Oh, that awful creature! take him away, away! why don't you take him away?" Ye who know Dr. Nelson, must have known that he did not say these things at random. He did not admit them without evidence, or state them without due consideration.

14. We are left to infer the character of this rich man from his worldly-mindedness. Christ did not seem to deem it necessary to state that he was a wicked man, but left this to be inferred from his self-indulgent life. He needed only to say of him that he lived for *self-gratification*; that he used his wealth for himself only, and not for the good of man, or for the glory of God. This explained his character sufficiently.

People act very much in this world as if they supposed poverty would disqualify them for heaven. They would seem to hold the exact opposite of the truth. Christ said, "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven"; and yet, who seems to have the least fear of losing heaven by means of the snare of wealth? How wonderful is the course that men pursue, and indeed a great many Christian men are pursuing! A Christian mother, writing to me from New York, said, "All, even Christians, are giving themselves up to making *money*, MONEY, MONEY! They are wholly given up to stocks, and banks, and getting rich." There is a great deal of this spirit all over the country, and even here. But look at it in the light of this parable and of our Saviour's assumption in regard to the character of this rich man, and what a fearful state is this to live and to die in.

15. What can Universalists say or believe when they read such passages as this? What miserable shifts they must make to interpret these words! I recollect when I tried and wanted to be Universalist, and for this purpose went to their meetings and heard their arguments, I said to myself, "For very shame, I could never use such arguments; no, not for the shame of admitting and avowing such

absurdities!" What can be more absurd than to resort to such sophistry and special pleading to set aside statements so clear and direct to the point as these in this chapter.

God is giving to all sinners -- to you sinners in this place -- a great many rich gifts. What use are you making of them? What are you doing with these gifts? What are you doing with these things which God comes down each day to bring to you? Are you cavilling, to prevent Christ from saving you if you can? Many act as if they meant to avoid being saved if by any means they can. You act just like reprobates. But I must explain myself. I often meet with persons whose spirit makes me believe they are reprobates. You know that all things are eternally present to the mind of God. He saw how these sinners would treat the gospel. He saw they would repel and hate Christ -- would not love his service nor accept the offers of his great salvation. He saw all this in his past eternity; therefore He reprobated them; therefore He gave them over to their own hearts' lusts. Those things which God saw in the depths of his eternity, we only see as they boil up upon the surface of actual present life. You see them resist the Spirit; you see them cavil and fight against God's truth; you know they are fighting against God. So strongly does the conviction fasten on the minds of Christians in some cases, that they cannot pray for those who they are assured are reprobates. Said a very pious woman, "For ten years, I have not prayed for that son." Why? She saw that he was set against God, and she could not pray for him. It is indeed an awful thing to find such cases in Christian families. Nobody can tell the agony of a parent's heart to see a son setting at naught all the claims and all the mercies of God, and working his dismal way obstinately down to the depths of an eternal hell. Some of you before me today, know that you have children who give awful evidence of being reprobate!

Hear that man across the street sighing as he moves along. What is the matter? He is in agony for a hardened, reprobate son.

You call at a neighbour's door; you ring the bell; the mother comes. You see the tear in her eye; she can scarcely speak. What is the matter? She has a son, and she fears he is a reprobate. All his conduct heightens the awful fear that he is given over of God.

But let those who have not gone so far, take warning. Some of those whom you have mocked and reviled, you may by-and-by see in glory. They may be in Abraham's bosom, and *you afar off!* You may cry to them for help, but all in

vain. Will they rush to your help? No. You see your father, your mother, afar off in that spirit land, you think they will fly to succour you, and bring you at least one drop of water, they used to do so many a time when you were in pain. Ah! many a time has that mother watched over your suffering frame, and rushed to your relief; but will she do so now? "My son, hear this: there is no passing from this place to that. You once lived in my house and lay in my bosom, but I cannot bring you one drop of water now!" And has it come to this? Must it come to this? Ah, yes, it *must come to this!*

Christian parents, one word to you. Suppose you conceive of this as your case. You see one of your children crying, "Oh, give me one drop of water to cool my burning tongue!" I know what Universalists would say to this. They say, "Can a parent be happy, and see this? And do you think a parent is more compassionate than God?"

But in that hour of retribution, those Christian parents will say even of the sons and daughters they have borne, "Let them perish, they are the enemies of God and of his kingdom! Let them perish, since they *would* not have salvation! They must perish, for God's throne must stand, and ought to stand, though all the race go down to hell!"

XVI. THE WANTS OF MAN AND THEIR SUPPLY.

"He began to be in want." -- Luke 15:14.

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." -- Matthew 5:6.

THE parable of the prodigal son is intended to illustrate the case of the sinner, coming to himself, opening his eyes to his true condition, and feeling himself destitute, empty, and wretched.

Man, as he stands revealed to himself in consciousness, is a wonderful being. By the earliest teachings of consciousness he finds himself to be a duality, consisting of body and soul. Farther revelations made in consciousness show him to be in some respects a triunity. For example, he has three classes of mental attributes: sensibility, intellect, and will. Still further, and yet more important in its bearings, he finds himself a tri-unity, inasmuch as he has three sides to his nature, one related to the material universe around him; another to all objects of thought and knowledge; and still another, related to God, and to duty.

1. He has first a *body*, and, through this, peculiar relations to the world he lives in. He has appetites for food, and numerous wants that terminate on the physical universe. These wants crave their appropriate supplies, and cannot be satisfied with anything else. In the order of time, these are earliest developed. They are few in number, that is, they *may* be,and those which are real are so. This class alone cease at death. Yet while they exist, they must be supplied.

Another fact deserving notice in reference to this class of wants is that man immediately assumes the existence of the objects to which his physical wants are correlated. The infant assumes this by instinct. There is no need that you should prove to man that these objects exist. He assumes this, and has only to inquire where they may be found. By a necessity of his nature he assumes their existence, and sets himself forthwith to search for them.

2. In the next place, let it be noticed that man has also an intellectual nature. He is made capable of knowledge, and has also an intense desire to know. These are real wants of his being. God has provided for their supply in the illimitable ocean of truth which invests him on every side. God has also breathed into his soul a spirit of inquiry, and acting out its deep impulses, he must inquire into the

truth and reason of things. It is curious to notice the difference between children and other animals. If you had never seen an infant before, and were to study his developments for the first time, you would be forcibly struck with these remarkable traits. The little one begins to notice, and to look inquiringly, almost as soon as it begins to look at all. See him fix his eyes upon his little hands, as if he would ask, What are these? He looks into his mother's eye as if he would ask a thousand questions, long before he can utter a word. But you can find no such manifestations of thought and inquiry in the kitten and the lamb. Give them enough to eat and scope for rest and play, and they are satisfied. They will never seem to ask you the reasons of things. Nay more, you cannot awaken within them a spirit of inquiry by any appliances you can employ. It is not in them, and you cannot get it in.

But the infant is a philosopher by birth. He has intellectual wants lying in his very nature, and he cannot be satisfied without their supply. He must know the reasons of things. This is the true idea of philosophy. The lower animals will lie down perfectly satisfied without knowing the reasons of things, or anything more about things than just suffices to meet their animal wants. But man, even from infancy, has wants pressing upon him in this direction, and he rouses himself, like a lion from his lair, to grasp the good his inner being craves in this direction. He cannot be satisfied without. He finds himself related to the whole universe of matter, and oh, what a world is opened to him for inquiry and knowledge! How naturally he looks up and abroad! It is not easy for the horse or the ox to look up. Their eye is prone; but man's is outward and upward. Man is made for inquiry.

It is this spirit of inquiry which leads so many young people to this place. They come here to get knowledge. How they hang on our lips, and press on us for the reasons of things, as if they could not be satisfied till they have penetrated to the bottom of every subject.

Men assume that there is an explanation of everything. They assume that these innate demands for knowledge were created, not to be denied -- not to remain ungratified, but to be gratified. Hence they grasp after knowledge, searching for it as for silver, and as if they deemed it more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold. What young man or young woman has not felt such curiosity excited, as to extort the cry, *I must know: I must find out the facts on this subject, and the reasons of the facts besides!*

3. Thirdly, man has yet another side to his nature -- the moral and spiritual department, correlated to God, to his attributes and law, and to great questions of duty and destiny. Man learns from consciousness that he has such a side to his being -- such a department in his nature. Hence he inquires after God. He raises questions about right and wrong, and asks to know the nature of virtue and vice. Often he finds in himself a great uneasiness of which he cannot well divine the cause. It puts him upon pressing these inquiries into his responsibilities and his mission in this state of his existence.

Let it now be especially observed that man instinctively assumes the existence of those things which stand related to each of these three sides of his nature. The infant begins to feel after his food with no thought of question as to the fact of there being food provided for his wants. When intelligence opens, the same assumption is made, that there are verities to be known, and the reasons why these things are so rather than otherwise. In like manner, when the eyes of the moral man begin to open, he assumes his own immortality, and assumes also the existence of a God. This is, indeed, the true account of his knowledge of this truth. Some have supposed that the idea of God in the human mind is wholly a thing of education. It is so in the same sense in which much of our intellectual knowledge is. There are many things about God which we need to learn from his word and from his works. But no man needs to have it demonstrated to him that there *is* a God, any more than a child needs to have it proved that there is food provided for him in the physical world, or the adult, that there are things to be known. The great cardinal truths pertaining to the existence of God, accountability, and duty, are assumed as readily and surely as men assume that there are truths correlated to their intelligence, or supplies in nature for their animal wants. It is of no use to say that some men are atheists, and therefore this doctrine cannot be true. Some men have, by speculation, befooled themselves into the belief (so they say) that there is no physical universe. But they believe in its existence none the less, and crave the good it proffers, and cannot live without it. Each one of these philosophers, although he may deny the existence of any physical universe, and declare there is no such thing as matter, yet expects his dinner at the appointed hour, and needs it for his comfort full as much as if he had not denied the existence of any such thing. So these atheists only know there is a God, although they say, "*in their heart,*" there is none.

It is vastly difficult for any man to feel at ease while he is resisting the constitutional demands of any department of his nature. "Alas!" said a young and

ambitious lawyer, who was driving his business and his books and his briefs, "alas!" said he, "what is the matter with me! I try to study, and cannot. I try to be happy, but I am not. What do I want? Wherein is the lack that, with all I have, yet leaves me so wretched?"

It was this strain of inquiry which led him to see that he needed God for his portion, and could not find a paradise without him.

Men need not wait for the proof of their immortality, or for proof of the necessity of virtue as a means for happiness. They know these things by a spontaneity of their moral nature. They know that holiness is a great want of their moral nature. How plainly do they see and know that they need such a being as God, to love and to obey, to trust and to adore!

I appeal to these students. If you have cultivated the habit of self-study, you have learned that you cannot find out yourself without finding God. Tracing out the problems of your own existence reveals to you your Maker. An irresistible conviction will force itself upon you that there is a God, and that you have everything to hope from his favour, and everything to fear from his frown. A view of yourself and of your own spiritual wants will show you that nothing else can supply your need but God. Have you not already found that the more you study, and the more you cultivate the habit of reflection, the less you can make yourself happy without God? Most of you find it impossible to enjoy yourselves in sin as you were wont to do before you gave yourselves to thought and reflection. The higher you ascend in the grade of moral and intellectual culture, the more intensely will you feel the want of moral culture and moral enjoyments. It is impossible for you to rise as a man without feeling a growing demand for the presence and influence of God as your Father and Friend.

Commonly, as the human mind opens to surrounding objects, and as its powers successively develop themselves, attention is first turned to physical wants, and next to intellectual. In one or the other of these pursuits, or in both, man is wont to become so engrossed as mainly to overlook the moral side of his nature. Yet the wants of his moral being will develop themselves, often in such a way at first as to make him exceedingly wretched, while yet he does not see what ails him, and quite fails to comprehend the reason of his unhappiness. No amount of knowledge or purely mental culture can make him happy. On the contrary, the more he knows the more he wants, and the more intensely dissatisfied he becomes with himself.

The objects that supply his bodily wants are at hand. He meets them on every side, and in abundance. So, also, pushing his efforts for this end, he finds ample materials for supplying his intellectual wants. He finds enough for mind to feed upon -- enough to exercise his faculties, and interest him in studious thought and earnest research.

So, also, with his moral and spiritual wants. These have their correlated objects. God is all around him. In the kingdoms of nature he sees the handiwork of an intelligent, designing Maker; and in the ways of providence, he cannot help seeing the agency of a kind and beneficent Father. As his natural eye gives him the material world, so his spiritual eye would give him God in everything were it not for the blinding influence of a bad heart. This fearfully darkens his vision to those great spiritual truths he so much needs to know. While he might be advancing hour by hour in the knowledge of God and of spiritual truth, going down into the great depths of sympathy with God, he finds, instead, a fearful conflict between his depraved impulses and his conscience, under the influence of which, truth gains but a slow access to his soul. Moreover, the moral side of his nature being latest developed, he often becomes so engrossed with sensual or intellectual pursuits, that he scarce has any power left for effective thought upon moral subjects. How fearfully some give way to worldly interests and claims, and others also to intellectual pursuits, some of you must know but too well.

Yet those moral wants you have neglected will some day arise and make their demands heard. It is well if they assume this urgency while yet their supply is possible. The prodigal son was a case of one who felt the pressure of these wants. He said, "I must go home to my father." David entered on record his testimony, "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" The mind thus becomes deeply conscious of cravings and aspirations which have God for their object, and which nothing but God can supply. If you examine the nature of these wants, you find them in part social. The mind craves communion with other minds. It thirsts for society, and wisely concludes that no society, no fellowship with other minds, can in any wise compare with communion with God. Perhaps he has tried the fellowship of mortals, and found it still unsatisfying. Hence he craves the richer, far richer, fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. He longs to

rise above communion with the finite to hold communion with the Infinite. Weary of drawing instructions from erring man, he thirsts for the pure fountains of knowledge as they flow from the Infinite Intelligence. Conscious that he must himself exist for ever, he craves the acquaintance and sympathy of his eternal Maker and Father. As he comes to know something of his great and glorious Friend, he feels that he needs an eternity in which to study God in his multiform and wonderful works and ways. And when he comes to breathe the atmosphere of purity which invests the glorious Presence, how intensely does he long for deliverance from all moral corruption! Oh, how does his soul thirst for an ever-growing conformity to God! The language of holy men on the sacred page is exceedingly strong on these points, as we may see from David's Psalms and Paul's Epistles. The latter declares, "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in him." No one can read these strong utterances of feeling, desire, and purpose, without seeing that the mind may develop itself with amazing intensity in this direction. There is scope and occasion for its utmost energies and aspirations.

REMARKS.

1. He must be wretched who neglects to supply his physical wants. He must pay the stem penalty of his neglect, as he will soon learn to his sorrow. Each organ of the body needs its appropriate development, exercise, and nutriment. He who should disregard the laws of his constitution in respect to the proper supply of these constitutional demands will find, ere long, that the penalty of such neglect is fearful and sure.

In like manner, if he stultifies himself and takes no pains to inquire after truth and knowledge; if he never troubles himself to know, and denies to his intellectual nature all its just demands, he must be far more wretched than a brute can be. But let a man neglect all spiritual culture and training, he becomes far more wretched still. Physical demands cease with the death of the body; the spiritual must continue during his entire existence, stretching on and still on for ever, an probably for ever increasing.

2. How cruel for a man to consider himself as merely a brute! Giving himself up to a grovelling life, regardless of his spiritual nature and even of his intellectual nature also, what a wretch he must be! Ye who are students know how to pity

and how to despise him! You can understand what he loses, for you know what satisfaction is taken in finding out the reasons of things. But see the mere animal who never looks abroad, never raises an inquiry. Why does he not set himself to study and think? Why not cast his thoughts abroad for knowledge? Why does he live a fool and a dunce, when he might be a *man?*

3. How cruel to treat anybody else as a mere animal! This is the most cruel thing you can do towards a fellow-being. You deny the existence of those great qualities which constitute him a man. You feed him as you would a horse, withholding all aliment for his intelligent mind. You feed him and your horse, each for the same reason; you want to keep him in working order to serve your selfish purposes. You regard all knowledge beyond what your horse needs as only so much injury to him. Holding your slave as his master, do you send him to school? Never. Do you teach him to read? Never. Do you provide him any means of instruction? No. In the same manner you shut down the gate upon his moral nature. You close up the windows of his soul and keep it as utterly dark as possible to the light of heaven. You tighten the thumb-screws down on every inlet of knowledge, so that he shall never know that he is anything more or other than a beast! Is not this horrible? What, then, shall we say of the man who does just this upon himself!

4. The more a man develops his intellectual faculties, yet neglects moral culture, the more miserable he becomes. It is striking to see how wretched the most highly cultivated men become. During all the latter years of his life, Daniel Webster was never seen sober, but he was wretched. While in his senses, his mind was deep in sorrow. Look in upon Congress and see there the great men of our land and of other lands; not a man of them is happy without piety and sound moral culture. Go and ask Byron if his gigantic mind and almost superhuman genius made him an angel of bliss. Ask him if he found this world a paradise. Perhaps no man ever cursed his fellow-beings more intensely, or enjoyed less in their society, than he. All such men, with high intellectual culture, make themselves wretched because they leave their moral powers in a state of utter wreck and distortion. There is no escape from this result. High intellectual culture must inevitably develop the idea and the claims of God. Let them turn their inquiries which way they will, they find God, and must feel more or less convicted of obligation to love and obey them. Repelling these obligations, it is impossible that they can be otherwise than wretched. I alluded to the case of a young lawyer who asked, "What makes me so unhappy? I feel myself

thoroughly wretched, and surely I can see no reason for it." The secret was this: all his life long he had neglected God; his studies had more and more brought God to view, and his sensibilities, under the action of conscience, had become exceedingly acute. How could he be otherwise than wretched! He might not see the reason of his unhappy state; yet, if he had well considered the laws of his moral nature, he would have found the reason lying there. Many of you begin to find the same results in your experience, and you must realise them more and more if you remain alienated in heart from God while yet your intelligence is more and more revealing God and his rightful claims on your heart.

5. Neglecters of God are not well aware either of the cause or the degree of their wretchedness. The wants of their physical nature are all met. They are fed and clad, and have every comfort that their physical system craves. Their social wants, too, are met. They have friends and society. They have also cultivated taste and any desired amount of objects for its gratification. There is a library and books in plenty. There are works of art from the masters in every profession. What more could they need? Yet they are wretched. What is the matter? How many thousand times has this inquiry been made, What can be the matter with me? I have everything heart can wish, or the eye desire, books, teachers, unbounded sources of information, yet I am unhappy; what does ail me?

I can tell you what. There is another side of your nature, more important than all the rest, and more craving, yet you shut off all its demands, and deny its claims. You have a conscience, yet you resist its monitions. You have desires correlated to God, yet you deny them their appropriate gratification. No fact is more ennobling to human nature than this, that man has desires correlated to God even as he has to his fellowmen, so that he can no more be happy without God than he can be without the sympathy and society of man. We all understand this law of human nature. We see man thirsting for companionship with his fellow-man, longing for society, and we cannot fail to see and to say that man is so constructed in his very nature that he must have society. Deprive him of it and he is wretched. Now the striking fact is that man has an equally strong demand in his very constitution for sympathy and fellowship with God. Unless this too be supplied, he cannot be happy.

Suppose you were to meet a man as ignorant of his physical wants as most men are of their spiritual. He does not understand that he must have food for his stomach, clothes for his body, heat to warm him in the winter frosts. Ah! you

would see the reason of his misery? Strange he does not know enough to supply his wants!

Or suppose him equally ignorant of his intellectual wants. He starves his soul of knowledge. Lean and barren, he seems to be panting for something higher and better, yet unaware both of the nature of this craving and of the proper source of supply. How easily could you tell him that "for the soul to be without knowledge is not good"!

So there is also a moral side to man's nature, and he can never be supremely happy till he becomes morally perfect. He struggles to get out of his moral agony; feels as if he should die if he cannot get out from under this moral load. Who has not felt this loathing of his abominable self, because he did not and would not search after God! Never did any man long for food or water more intensely than the man who suffers himself to attend to the inner voice of his moral being, and thirsts after God.

6. Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst, for when they cry unto God to be filled, he will fill them. Let them cry unto God for bread and water; does he not hear their cry? Ah, verily, he hears the young ravens when they cry, and the young lions when they roar and suffer hunger; and the infant voices of his intelligent creation are not less sure to come up into his car. Does he not love to supply these wants which grow out of the nature he gave them? Indeed he does. He spread out the fair earth and its rich fields of lovely green. He meant to fill the earth with supplies for man and beast, yea, for every living thing.

In like manner, of the mental wants of his intelligent creatures, he loves to meet these with open hand; loves to excite the spirit of inquiry and then supply to us the means of gratification. The things we need to know he loves to teach us.

But our moral and spiritual wants, he is infinitely more ready to supply. Does not your inner heart say, Verily, this must be so? It is so. No sooner does the soul go forth after God, than he is near -- ineffably near. It is wonderful to see how soon God is found when once the soul begins in true earnest to inquire after him. Is it not striking that God should so love to reveal himself, and should take such pains to insinuate himself into our confidence, and, as it were, work himself into universal communion and contact with our whole souls, so as to fill every moral want of our being? In view of this desire and effort on his part, and in view also of the means provided and promised for this result, we can see why God should

command us to "be filled with the Spirit." Such infinite supplies provided, and such earnest desire manifested on the part of God to have us appropriate these supplies to their utmost extent; it is as if an ocean of water were suspended above our heads, and we have only to lift the valve and let down these ocean waters upon our needy souls. There is the promise, let down like a silken cord; what have we to do but to take hold of it and pull down infinite blessings!

7. Until man feels his spiritual wants, he will resist all attempts you may make to bring him to God. Hence the necessity of touching the mainspring of danger, of arousing his fears, and developing his moral sensibility. Hence the need of appeals to his conscience and to his sense of danger. Until you can make his moral nature sensitive, and rouse up his dark and dead soul to moral feelings, there is no hope for him. But when you can touch this side of his nature, and quicken him to feeling, and even to agony, under the lash of conscience, and make him really appreciate his wants, then he begins to feel his wants, and to ask how they can be met and supplied. This is the true secret of promoting revivals. You must go around among these dark, insensible minds, and pour in light upon this side of their nature. You must wake them up to earnest thought -- you must rouse up the man's conscience and soul till he shall cry out after God and his salvation.

I always have strong hopes of students; for although they sometimes get wise in their own conceits, and sometimes render themselves ridiculous by their low ambition, yet, taken as a class, there is great hope of them. If suitable means are used, very many of them will be converted. Probably no class of students ever passed through college, the right means of instruction and influence being used with them, without deeply feeling the power of truth, and many of them becoming converted. They must, almost of necessity, feel every blow that is struck; every truth, brought home clearly through their intelligence upon their conscience, wakens a response, and impels the soul to cry out after God. Hence I have strong hopes of you. Yet many of you, I know, are not now converted. God grant you may be soon! I hope the hearts of this Christian people will reach your case in strong effectual prayer. You can indeed resist every effort made to save you, if you will; you can reject Christ, however earnest his entreaties or tender his loving kindness; but you cannot change your nature so that it shall be happy in rebellion against God and his truth; you cannot hush the rebukes of an abused conscience for ever; these wants of your inner being must be met, or what will become of you? Your bodily wants will soon cease; and you need not care much

therefore for them. Your intellectual pleasures, also, must ere long come to an end; for how can they pass over with you into the realm of outer darkness, where are weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth! Doubtless that is a state not of light, and truth, and joy in pursuit of knowledge; but of delusions, and errors, and of knowledge agonising its possessor with keenest pangs for ever and ever! I do not believe sinners will have any intellectual pleasure in hell. It cannot be possible that they will enjoy any knowledge they will have there, or any means of attaining knowledge. The very idea is precluded by the relations that conscience must sustain to everything they know. All possible knowledge must have some bearing upon God, duty, and their moral relations, and hence must serve only to harrow up their sensibilities with keenest anguish. Oh, how will they gnash their teeth and gnaw their tongues in direst woe for ever! "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked!" More and more deeply dissatisfied to all eternity! execrating and cursing their insane selves for the madness of rejecting God and his gospel when they might have had both, now it only remains for them to wail in bitterness and anguish, lifting up their unavailing cries, to which the thunders of Jehovah's curse respond in everlasting echoes, "Woe to the wicked; it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

O sinner, will you yet press on into the very jaws of such a hell!

XVII. ON BELIEVING WITH THE HEART.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." -- Romans 10:10.

THE subject brought to view in this passage requires of us that we should,

I. *Distinguish carefully between intellectual and heart-faith*.

There are several different states of mind which are currently called *faith*, this term being obviously used in various senses. So, also, is the term *heart* used in various senses, and, indeed, there are but few terms which are not used with some variety of signification. Hence it becomes very important to discriminate.

Thus, in regard to faith, the Scriptures affirm that the "devils also believe and tremble," but it surely cannot be meant that they have heart-faith. They do not believe unto righteousness.

Faith in the intellect is a judgment -- an opinion. The mind so judges, and is convinced that the facts are so. Whatever the nature of the things believed, this is an involuntary state of mind. Those things believed may be truth; they may relate to God and may embrace the great fundamental facts and doctrines of religion; yet this faith may not result in righteousness. It is often true that persons have their judgments convinced, yet this conviction reaches not beyond their intelligence. Or perhaps it may go so much further as to move their feelings and play on their sensibility, and yet may do nothing more. It may produce no change in the *will*. It may result in no new moral purpose; may utterly fail to reach the voluntary attitude of the mind, and, hence, will make no change in the life.

But heart-faith, on the other hand, is true confidence, and involves an earnest committal of one's self and interests to the demands of the truth believed. It is precisely such a trust as we have in those to whom we cling in confidence -- such as children feel in their real friends and true fathers and mothers. We know they are naturally ready to believe what is said to them, and to commit themselves to the care of those they love.

The heart is in this. It is a voluntary state of mind -- always substantially and essentially an act of the will. This kind of faith will, of course, always affect the feelings, and will influence the *life*. Naturally, it tends towards righteousness,

and may truly be said to be "unto righteousness." It implies love, and seems in its very nature to unify itself with the affections. The inspired writers plainly did not hold faith to be so purely an act of will as to exclude the affections. Obviously, they made it *include* the affections.

II. *Some of the conditions of intellectual faith*.

1. Sometimes, but not always, faith of the heart is essential to faith of the intellect. Thus, it may be necessary that we have heart-faith in a man before we are duly prepared to investigate the facts that relate to his character. So, in relation to God, if we lack heart-faith in him, we are in no state to deal fairly with the evidence of his works and ways. Here it is well to notice the vast difference between the irresistible assumptions of the mind respecting God, and those things which we arrive at by study and reasoning. Heart-faith seems essential to any candid investigation.

2. It is also essential to our *conviction* as to the truth. I am not prepared to judge candidly concerning a friend, unless I have some of this heart-faith in him. Suppose I hear a rumour about my best friend, affirming something which is deeply scandalous. My regard for him forbids my believing this scandalous report, unless it comes most fully sustained by testimony. On the other hand, if I had no heart-confidence in him, my intelligence might be thrown entirely off and I might do both him and myself the greatest injustice.

Many of you have had this experience in regard to faith. Often, in the common walks of life, you have found that, if it had not been for your heart-confidence, you would have been greatly deceived. Your heart held on; at length, the evidence shone out; you were in a condition to judge charitably, and thus you arrived at the truth.

3. Heart-faith is specially essential where there is mystery. Of course there are points in religious doctrine which are profoundly mysterious. This fact is not peculiar to religious truth, but is common to every part of God's works -- which is equivalent to saying, It is common to all real science. Any child can ask me questions which I cannot answer. Without heart-confidence, it would be impossible for society to exist. Happily for us, we can often wisely confide when we cannot, by any means, understand.

In the nature of the case, there must be mysteries about God, for the simple

reason that he is infinite and we are finite. Yet he reveals enough of himself to authorise us to cherish the most unbounded confidence in him. Therefore, let no one stumble at this, as though it were some strange thing; for, in fact, the same thing obtains to some extent in all our social relations. In these, we are often compelled to confide in our friends where the case seems altogether suspicious. Yet we confide, and, by-and-by, the truth comes to light, and we are thankful that our heart-faith held us from doing them injustice.

4. Again, heart-faith is specially in place where there is contradictory evidence.

Often it may seem to you that God must be partial. Then the mind needs the support of confidence in God. You go on safely if there is, underlying all, the deep conviction that God is and must be right. See that woman, stripped of everything -- husband, children, all; how can she give any account of this? You may remember the case of a woman who travelled West with her husband and family; there buried her husband and all but two little ones, and then made her weary way back with these on foot. Pinching want and weariness drove her into a stranger's dwelling at nightfall; there a churlish man would have turned her into the street, but his wife had a human heart, and insisted on letting them stay, even if she herself sat up all night. Think on the trying case of that lone widow. She does not sleep; her mingled grief and faith find utterance in the words, "*My heart is breaking, but God is good*."

How could she make it out that God is good? just as you would in the case of your husband, if one should tell you he had gone for ever, and proved faithless to his vows. You can set this insinuation aside, and let your heart rise above it. You do this on the strength of your heart-faith.

So the Christian does in regard to many mysterious points in God's character and ways. You cannot see how God can exist without even beginning to exist; or how he can exist in three persons, since no other beings known to you exist in more than one. You cannot see how he can be eternally good, and yet suffer sin and misery to befall his creatures. But, with heart-faith, we do not need to have everything explained. The heart says to its Heavenly Father, I do not need to catechise thee, nor ask impertinent questions, for I know it is all right. I know God can never do anything wrong. And so the soul finds a precious joy in trusting, without knowing how the mystery is solved. Just as a wife, long parted from her husband, and, under circumstances that need explanation, yet when he returns, she rushes to meet him with her loving welcome, without waiting for

one word of explanation. Suppose she had waited for the explanation before she could speak a kind word. This might savour of the intellect, but certainly it would not do honour to her heart. For her heart-confidence, her husband loves her better than ever, and well he may!

You can understand this; and can you not also apply it to your relations to God? God may appear to your view to be capricious, but you know he is not; may appear unjust, but you know he cannot be. Ah, Christian, when you comprehend the fact of God's wider reach of vision, and of his greater love, then you will cry out, with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." When you have trusted so, think you not that your heart will be as dear to Christ as ever?

III. *What are not, and what are, conditions of heart-faith*.

1. It is *not* conditioned upon comprehending the facts to be believed. We may know a thing to be a fact, while yet we are entirely unable to explain it. The reasons and the explanations are quite a different thing from the evidence which sustains the fact and commends it to our belief.

2. Let it also be borne in mind that it is not half as necessary to know all the reasons in the case of God's ways as in man's. The ground of the difference is, that we know, in general, that God is always right -- a knowledge which we cannot have in regard to man. Of God, our deepest and most resistless convictions assure us that all is right. Our corresponding convictions in the case of man are far from being irresistible. Yet, even in regard to men, we often find that a conviction of their rectitude, which is far less than irresistible, leads us to trust. How much more should our stronger convictions as to God lead us evermore to trust in him!

3. Again this heart-faith in God does not rest on our ability to prove even that God exists. Many an earnest Christian has never thought of this, any more than of proving his own existence. An irresistible conviction gives him both, without other proof.

But, positively, God must be revealed to your inner being so that you are conscious of his existence and presence. There is not, perhaps, in the universe, a thing of which we can be more certain than of God's existence. The mind may be more deeply acquainted with God than with any other being or thing. Hence this heart-confidence may be based on God's revelations to the inner soul of man.

Such revelations may reach the very highest measure of certainty. I do not mean to imply here that we are not certain of the facts of observation. But this is a stronger assurance and certainty. The mind becomes personally acquainted with God, and is conscious of this direct and positive knowledge.

4. A further condition is, that the soul be inwardly drawn to God. In our relations to each other, we are sometimes conscious of a peculiar sympathy which draws us towards a friend. This fact is a thing of consciousness, of which we may be quite unable to give any explanation. A similar attraction draws us to God, and seems to be a natural condition of the strongest forms of heart-faith.

5. It is quite essential to heart-faith that we have genuine love to God. In the absence of good-will towards God, there never can be this faith of the heart. The wife has no heart-faith in her husband, save as she loves him. Her heart must be drawn to him in real love -- else his heart-faith will draw back and demand more evidence.

In view of this principle, God takes measures to win our love and draw our hearts to himself. As human beings do towards each other, so *he* manifests his deep interest in us -- pours out his blessings on us in lavish profusion, and, in every way, strives to assure us that he is truly our friend. These are his methods to win the confidence of our hearts. When it becomes real to us that we owe everything to God, our health, gifts, all our comforts, then we can bear many dark and trying things. Then we know that God loves us, even though he scourges us; just as children know that parents love them, and mean their good, even though they chastise them. Under these broad and general manifestations of love, they confide, even though there be no present manifestations of love. You may remember how Cecil taught his little daughter the meaning of gospel faith. She came to him, one day, with her hands full of little beads, greatly delighted, to show them. He said to her calmly, "You had better throw them all into the fire." She was almost confounded; but, when she saw he was in earnest, she trustfully obeyed, and cast them in. After a few days, he brought home for her a casket of jewels. "There," said he, "my daughter, you had faith in me the other day, and threw your beads into the fire; that *was faith*; now I can give you things much more precious. Are not these far better?" So you should always believe in God. He has jewels for those who will believe, and cast away their sins.

IV. *Heart-faith is unto righteousness -- real obedience.*

This trustful and affectionate state of heart naturally leads us to obey God. I have often admired the faith manifested by the old theologian philosophers who held fast to their confidence in God, despite of the greatest of absurdities. Their faith could laugh at the most absurd principles involved in their philosophy of religious truth. It is a remarkable fact that the greater part of the church has been in their philosophy *necessitarians*, holding not the freedom, but the bondage, of the will; their doctrine being that the will is determined *necessarily* by the strongest motive. President Edwards held these philosophical views, but despite of them, he believed that God is supremely good; the absurdities of this philosophy did not shake his faith in God. So all the really Old School theologians hold the absurdities of hyper-Calvinism; as, for example, that God absolutely and supremely controls all the moral actions of all his creatures.

Dr. Beecher, in controversy with Dr. Wilson, some years since, held that obligation implied ability to obey. This Dr. Wilson flatly denied, whereupon Dr. B. remarked that few men could march up and face such a proposition without winking. It is often the case that men have such heart-confidence in God that they will trust him despite of the most flagrant absurdities. There is less superstition in this than I used to suppose, and more faith. Men forget their dogmas and philosophy, and, despite of both, love and confide.

Some men have held monstrous doctrines -- even that God is the author of sin, and puts forth his divine efficiency to make men sin, as truly as, by his Spirit, to make them holy. This view was held by Dr. Emmons; yet he was eminently a pious man, of childlike, trustful spirit. It is indeed strange how such men could hold these absurdities at all, and, scarcely less so, how they could hold them and yet confide sweetly in God. Their hearts must have been fixed in this faith by some other influence than that of these monstrous notions in philosophy and theology. For these views of God, we absolutely know, were contrary to their *reason*, though not to their *reasonings* -- a very wide and essential distinction, which is sometimes overlooked. The intuitive affirmations of their reason were one thing; the points which they reached by their philosophical reasonings were quite another thing. The former could not lie about God, the latter could. The former laid that sure foundation for heart-faith; the latter went to make up their intellectual notions, the absurdities of which (we notice with admiration), never seemed to shake their Christian faith. While these reasonings pushed them on into the greatest absurdities, their reason held their faith and piety straight.

The faith of the heart is proof against all forms of infidelity. Without this, nothing is proof. For if men without piety drop the affirmations of their intuitive reason, and then attempt, philosophically, to reason out all the difficulties they meet with, they almost inevitably stumble.

Heart-faith carries one over the manifold mysteries and difficulties of God's providence. In this field there must be difficulties, for no human vision can penetrate to the bottom of God's providential plans and purposes.

So, also, does this faith of the heart carry one over the mysteries of the atonement. It is indeed curious to notice how the heart gets over all these. It is generally the case that the atonement is accepted by the heart unto salvation, before its philosophy is understood. It was manifestly so with the apostles; so with their hearers; and so, even with those who heard the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The Bible says but very little indeed on the point of the *philosophy* of the atonement.

So, also, of the doctrine of the Trinity; and so of other doctrines generally. They were known and taught as practical truths, and were accepted as such, long before their philosophy was specially investigated. If any difficulties arose in minds specially inquisitive, it was overcome by heart-faith, or settled by the intuitive affirmations of the reason, and not by speculative reasoning.

It is in no sense unreasonable that God should require us to have such faith in him. Properly considered, he does not require us to believe what we do not know to be true. He does not ask us to renounce our common sense, and exercise a groundless credulity. When we trust his general character, and accept certain dark dispensations of providence as doubtless right, what is it that we believe? Not the special reason for this mysterious dispensation, but we believe that, despite of its dark aspect to us, God's hand in it is both wise and good, and we believe this because we have abundant ground to confide in his general character. It is as if you were to tell me that a known and tried friend of mine had told a lie. I should say, "I cannot believe it. I know him too well." But you say, "Here is the evidence. It looks very dark against him." "Very likely," I reply, "but yet I cannot believe it. There will be some explanation of this. I cannot believe it."

Now I consider myself fully authorised to reject at once all surmises and rumours against my known friend. I am bound to do so, until the evidence

against him becomes absolutely conclusive. This is altogether reasonable. How much more so in the case of dark things in God's doings!

For it should be considered that man may deceive us; God never can. We do not know man's heart always, to the very core; and if we did, it may change; what once was true, becomes false. But not so with God: our intuitive convictions affirm that God is always good, and always wise; and, moreover, that there can never be any declension in his love, or any revolution in his character.

Consequently Christians are often called on to believe God, not only without, but against, present evidence.

Abraham, called out of his home and country to go into a strange land, obeyed, not knowing whither he went. He might have asked many questions about the reasons; he does not appear to have asked any.

Commanded to offer up Isaac, he might, with apparent propriety, have expostulated earnestly. He might have said, "Lord, that would be murder! It would outrage the natural affection which thou hast planted in my bosom. It would encourage the heathen around us in their horrid abominations of making their children pass through the fire to Moloch." All this, and more, he might have said; but, so far as appears, he said nothing save this: "The Lord commands, and I obey. If he pleases he can raise up my Isaac from the dead." So he went on and virtually offered up his son Isaac, and, "in a figure, received him again from the dead." And God fixed the seal of his approbation on this act of faith, and held it out before all ages as a model of faith and obedience, despite of darkness and objections.

So Christians are often called to believe without present evidence, other than what comes from their knowledge of God's general character. For a season, God lets everything go against them, yet they believe. Said a woman, passing through great trials, with great confidence in God: "O Lord, I know thou art good, for thou hast shown me this; but, Lord, others do not understand this; they are stumbled at it. Canst thou not show them so that they shall understand this?"

REMARKS.

1. The demand for reasons often embarrasses our faith. This is one of the tricks of the devil. He would embarrass our faith by telling us we must understand all God's ways before we believe. Yet we ought to see that this is impossible and

unreasonable. Abraham could not see the reasons for God's command to offer Isaac a bloody sacrifice; he might have expostulated; but he did not. The simplicity and beauty of his faith appears all along in this very thing -- that he *raised* no questions. He had a deeper insight into God's character. He knew too much of God to question his wisdom or his love. For, a man might understand all the reasons of God's ways, yet this knowledge might do him no good; his heart might rebel even then.

In this light you may see why so much is said about Abraham's faith. It was gloriously trustful and unquestioning! What a model! No wonder God commends it to the admiring imitation of the world!

2. It is indeed true that faith must often go forward in the midst of darkness. Who can read the histories of believing saints, as recorded in Scripture, without seeing that faith often leads the way through trials? It would be but a sorry development of faith, if, at every step, God's people must know everything before they could trust him, and must understand all his reasons. Most ample grounds for faith lie in his general character, so that we do not need to understand the special reasons for his particular acts.

3. We are mere infants -- miserably poor students of God's ways. His dealings on every side of us appear to us mysterious. Hence it should be expected that we shall fail to comprehend his reasons, and consequently we must confide in him without this knowledge. Indeed, just here lies the virtue of faith, that it trusts God on the ground of his general character, while the mind can by no means comprehend his reasons for particular acts. Knowing enough of God to assure us that he must be good, our faith trusts him, although the special evidence of goodness in particular cases may be wanting.

This is a kind of faith which many do not seem to possess or to understand. Plainly they do not confide in God's dealings.

4. It is manifestly needful that God should train Christians to exercise faith here and now; since in heaven we shall be equally unable to comprehend all his dealings. The holy in heaven will no doubt believe in God; but they must do it by simple faith -- not on the ground of a perfect knowledge of God's plans. What a trial of faith it must have been to the holy in heaven to see sin enter our world! They could see few, perhaps none, of the reasons, before the final judgment, and must have fallen back upon the intuitive affirmations of their own minds. The

utmost they could say was, We know God must be good and wise; therefore we must wait to see the results, and humbly *trust*.

5. It is not best for parents to explain everything to their children, and, especially, they should not take the ground of requiring nothing of which they cannot explain all the reasons. Some profess to take this ground. It is, for many reasons, unwise. God does not train his children so.

Faith is really natural to children. Yet some will not believe their children converted until they can be real theologians. This assumes that they must have all the great facts of the gospel system explained so that they can comprehend their philosophy before they believe them. Nothing can be further from the truth.

6. It sometimes happens that those who are converted in childhood become students of theology in more advanced years, and then, getting proud of their philosophy and wisdom, lose their simple faith and relapse into infidelity. Now I do not object to their studying the philosophy of every doctrine up to the limits of human knowledge; but I do object to their casting away their faith in God. For there is no lack of substantial testimony to the great doctrines of the gospel. Their philosophy may stagger the wisest man; but the evidence of their truth ought to satisfy all, and alike the child and the philosopher. Last winter I was struck with this fact -- which I mention because it seems to present one department of the evidences of Christianity in a clear light. One judge of the court said to another, "I come to you with my assertion that I inwardly know Jesus Christ, and as truly and as well as I know you. Can you reject such testimony? What would the people of this State say to you if you rejected such testimony on any other subject? Do you not every day let men testify to their own experience?" The judge replied, "I cannot answer you." "Why, then," replied the other, "do you not believe this testimony? I can bring before you thousands who will testify to the same thing."

7. Again I remark, it is of great use to study the truths of the gospel system theologically and philosophically, for thus you may reach a satisfactory explanation of many things which your heart knew, and clave to, and would have held fast till the hour of your death. It is a satisfaction to you, however, to see the beautiful harmony of these truths with each other, and with the known laws of mind and of all just government.

Yet theological students sometimes decline in their piety, and for a reason which

it were well for them to understand. One enters upon this study simple-hearted and confiding; but, by-and-by, study expands his views; he begins to be charmed with the explanations he is able to give of many things not understood before; becomes opinionated and proud; becomes ashamed of his former simple heart-faith, and thus stumbles fearfully, if not fatally. If you will hold on with all your simple heart-confidence to the immutable love and wisdom of God, all will be well. But it never can be well to put your intellectual philosophy in the place of the simplicity of gospel faith.

8. Herein is seen one reason why some students do not become pious. They determine that they will understand everything before they become Christians. Of course they are never converted. Quite in point, here, is a case I saw a few years since. Dr. B., an intelligent but not pious man, had a pious wife, who was leading her little daughter to Christ. The Doctor, seeing this, said to her, "Why do you try to lead that child to Christ? I cannot understand these things myself, although I have been trying to understand them these many years; how, then, can she?" But some days after as he was riding out alone, he began to reflect on the matter; the truth flashed upon his mind, and he saw that neither of them could understand God unto perfection -- not he any more than his child; while yet either of them could know enough to believe unto salvation.

9. Again, gospel faith is voluntary -- a will-trust. I recollect a case in my own circle of friends. I could not satisfy my mind about one of them. At length, after long struggling, I said, I will repel these things from my mind, and rule out these difficulties. My friend is honest and right; I will believe it, and will trust him none the less for these slanders. In this I was right.

Towards God this course is always right. It is always right to cast away from your mind all those dark suspicious about him who can never make mistakes and who is too good to purpose wrong. I once said to a sister in affliction, Can you not believe all this is for your good, though you cannot see *how* it is? She brightened up, saying: "I must believe in God, and I will."

Who of you have this heart-faith? Which of you will now commit yourself to Christ? If the thing required were intellectual faith, I could explain to you how it is reached. It must be through searching the evidence in the case. But heart-faith must be reached by simple effort -- by a voluntary purpose to *trust*. Ye, who say, I cannot do this, bow your knees before God and commit yourself to his will; say, O my Saviour! I take thee at thy word." This is a simple act of will.

XVIII. ON BEING HOLY.

"Be ye holy, for I am holy." -- 1 Peter 1:16.

THIS precept enjoins holiness, and our first business should therefore be to inquire what holiness *is*. It is plain that the Bible uses the term as synonymous with *moral purity*; but the question will still return, What is moral purity?

I answer, moral fitness; that which we see to be morally appropriate. It is, in substance, moral propriety; in other words perfect love; such as God requires. It is sympathy with God and likeness to him; the state of mind that God has. Holiness in God is not a part of his nature in such a sense that it is not voluntary in him, but it is a voluntary exercise and state of his mind.

The same is true of all beings. Holiness is not a thing of nature as opposed to free action, but must always be a free and a moral thing. It is not possible to any beings but such as are made in the image of God in the sense of being moral agents. They must have free-will, and then must voluntarily conform themselves to rectitude. Nothing less or other than a voluntary conformity of themselves to the moral law can be holiness. In them all, holiness is that state of mind which is precisely appropriate to their nature and relations. This state is expressed in one word -- love, meaning by this, *benevolence* -- good-will to all. When this term is used in its widest sense, it includes all moral duty. Hence this command to be holy requires that we bring ourselves into a moral adjustment to God and our entire moral duty.

I. *Why should we be holy?*

God, as in our text, requires it. "It is written, 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.'"

The context also combines with the text to enforce the duty by God's example. "As he who hath called you is holy, *so* be ye holy in all manner of conversation" according to the ancient precept, "Be ye holy, *for* I am holy." Because I am holy, therefore be ye holy likewise.

Our Lord enforced the same duty by the same reason (Matt. 5:48): "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect."

II. *What are the reasons of this requirement?*

1. We cannot but require it of ourselves. Our own nature irresistibly demands it of us -- his own individual conscience of every moral agent. There is no moral agent whose nature does not require holiness of himself. Each one is so constituted that it is impossible he should not require this of himself. Hence there must always be a war in his own bosom unless he yields to this demand. He knows he ought to, and therefore, by a necessity as strong as his own nature, he must become holy, or fail of peace and conscious self-approval.

No moral agent can respect himself unless he is holy. He may be careless and thoughtless, and may thus slide over and pass some of the self-reproach he must otherwise feel for unholiness; but he can never have any honest self-respect unless he behaves himself in a comely and decent way which he believes to be, in his circumstances, *right*.

Need I urge that self-respect is a thing of very great importance? Few are fully aware how very important self-respect is to themselves and to others. Let a young man lose his self-respect, and what is he? What hope can you have of his stability and manliness? A young woman void of self-respect is no longer herself. Who does not know how completely she falls from her position as a virtuous woman!

This form of self-respect pertains to our relations to this world and to society. But suppose a moral agent in like manner to lose his self-respect towards God. How fearful must be the influence of this loss on his heart! How reckless of moral rectitude he becomes in all that pertains to his Maker!

Or suppose God to lose his self-respect. Suppose he should cease to do what is honourable to himself, and should no longer care to act in a manner worthy of his own esteem. How fearful must be the consequences first to himself, and next to his whole universe! Suppose him to be morally impure, no longer adjusting his conduct to his own standard of right. It shocks us unutterably to conceive of God as acting in a way unworthy of himself. We know how keenly every sensitive and right-minded being feels the disgrace of having consciously acted in a way unworthy of himself. Those who have been conscious of this pain have often thought how God must feel, *if*, with his infinite sensibilities, he should act unworthy of himself. You sometimes experience this feeling, and therefore know how you loathe yourself and have no peace or rest in your soul.

It is true that these considerations may have but little weight with those who

know nothing of holiness, and who have never cultivated their own right feelings and sentiments; but those of you who have been near to God, and have had your "hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience," must appreciate it.

2. Another reason why we should be holy is, that God requires it of us. He has made us in his own image -- like himself in the attributes of intellect, sensibility, and free-will; and therefore, for the same reasons that make him require holiness of himself, he must require it of us. He must require it of us because it is his duty to do.

He requires us to be holy because he cannot make us happy unless we will become holy. Our nature being what it is, it is for ever impossible that we should be happy without being holy. God is happy, because he is holy; he knows that we exist under the same law of nature and necessity; hence his benevolence prompts, nay compels, him to use this necessary means of securing our happiness.

REMARKS.

1. Sinners know they are not holy. All know this, yet many often say, What have I done so very bad? No matter whether very bad (judged by the popular standard), or not; you know you are not holy. Now do not suppose yourself to be holy as God is holy. You know there is none of this character in you. How much soever confused men's sentiments on this subject may be, it is universally true that they conceive of God as being holy in a sense in which they are not themselves. Whatever they may *say* of it, they *know* this.

2. The hope that unconverted people often have that they shall be saved is utterly without foundation. Many try to think they have not done anything so bad that they deserve to be sent to hell!

How strange that such men should think themselves fit for heaven! Christ said, "Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye *must* be born again." No marvel that men should need a radical change! Hearts so foreign from love, so full of selfishness -- how can such hearts dwell in heaven! The unholy man's hope of heaven -- how utterly absurd! What nonsense that men should cherish such hopes without any holiness to fit them for it! just as if heaven were a certain *place,* of no peculiar character, and to go there would be to ensure one's bliss! You know better! You know something about the business and the delights of the Christian -- you know

they are such as you delight not in. The Sabbath is no privilege to you. Rather you exclaim, "Behold, what a weariness is it!" Social worship has no spiritual attractions for you. How, then, can you suppose that heaven would be a world of joy to you?

3. Many who know they must become holy, are yet very ignorant of the way in which they are to become so. Having begun in the Spirit, they try to become perfect in the flesh. Their reliance is more on resolutions, than on Christ embraced by faith. A leading minister of the Presbyterian church, not long since, heard a sermon showing that men are sanctified by receiving Christ into the heart by faith. He remarked, "We are just beginning to receive this doctrine. We have a long time been trying to become holy by resolutions."

Of many it is true that all their efforts are by works of law. They seem to know that all the efforts they make without Christ avail nothing, save only sin.

4. Pardon without holiness is impossible, in this sense: that the heart must turn from its sins to God before it can be forgiven. Repentance is really nothing more or less than turning from sin to holiness; and who does not know that the Scriptures teach that repentance must precede pardon? Reversing this order would ruin the sinner. The *idea* that God can reverse it, works only ruin to those who accept it.

5. The command to be holy implies the practicability of becoming so. I meet with some professed Christians who on this subject have really no hope. They feel the need of being holy, but they are in despair of attaining it before they die. Now, these Christians claim to be *believers*, but they are not. The grand difficulty in their case is, that they do not believe God's word of promise. They have no faith that men can become holy in this life, yet they say they believe in Christ. Yet what is Christ if not a Saviour? A Saviour from what, if not from *sin?* Is it not expressly said, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins?" What is Christ to do? Does he save his people *in* their sins? Shall he not rather save them *from* their sins, and "sanctify them wholly," and "redeem them unto himself as a peculiar people, zealous of good works?" Does it not seem strange that so many profess to be believers in Christ, but yet avow that they do not believe the plainest things said in the Bible of Christ? They claim to be believers! What! are they believers, gospel-believers, and yet do not believe what Christ says? Nay more, they tell you it is dangerous to believe that you can be holy in this world! Said a Unitarian minister, "How

strange that the Orthodox should object to sanctification in this life!" He had been reading the views presented here, and said, "Why can they object? If they profess to believe that Jesus is a divine Saviour, and that in him all fulness dwells, why should they object? They should either give up their doctrine of a divine Saviour, and deny that he is able to save to the uttermost, and abandon their ideas of a divine Redeemer, or admit your views to be true," and certainly there seems to be force in his reasoning.

I have never been more struck with this great idea -- salvation from sinning by Jesus Christ than I have during the past winter. I found it everywhere as I read the New Testament, and indeed in the Old Testament also. Oh, how strange that the church should be fighting the idea of becoming holy through Jesus Christ! How strange that they should insist that he will do no such thing! Is it not wonderful?

6. Christ's promises and relations to his people imply a pledge of all the help we need. The entire gospel scheme is adapted to men -- not in the sense of conniving at their weakness, but of really helping them out of it. It does not say, "Go on in your sins"; does not smooth this path by saying, "No man can live sinless in this world"; but it says, "Take hold of Christ's strength, and he will help you." It does not encourage you to hold on in sinning, but it urges you to take hold of Christ for all the help you need to overcome the practical difficulties in your way. Its language is, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

While you affirm your moral obligation, you are more and more impressed with your moral weakness. But this weakness is what Christ counterbalances with his strength. In the extremist weakness, his strength finds largest scope and fullest development. "As thy day, so shalt thy strength be" when you shalt thoroughly cast thyself on the arm of the Mighty One.

Hence the command to be holy is no apology for despondency, but should really encourage us to take hold of the strength promised to meet human weakness.

7. God sympathises with every honest effort we make to become holy. Of course he does; how can he fail to do so? Wherever he sees a moral struggle in any soul, it interests him exceedingly. He sympathises infinitely more deeply than we do. And yet some of us know how deeply we sympathise where we see a convert getting hold of the idea of sanctification by Christ. In some such cases I have

known the joy of older Christians to be really inexpressible. When I have seen gospel ministers getting hold of the idea of sanctification, and struggling to reach the *experience* of that idea, I have said to myself, If we can feel so deeply in view of such a struggle, how much more must God feel! Do you not think God feels? Ah, indeed, in every pulse of his infinite and boundless sensibility!

8. If we become partakers of his holiness, we are made sure of the river of his pleasures! This comes both of the nature of the case and of the revealed laws of his kingdom. Holiness becomes God's house for ever. And while it is fearfully true that, without holiness, no man shall see the Lord, it is delightfully sure that the holy shall see him and enjoy spiritual blessedness in his presence.

9. All men will sometimes feel the necessity of this holiness. In some cases, it is felt most deeply. Last winter I became acquainted with a woman, hopefully a Christian, but who had heard very little on this subject. She had been converted under circumstances where the great desolation and moral darkness became the immediate occasion of her awakening. From such surroundings, she had struggled up into the light. Yet when she came to hear the real gospel, and the way of holiness was opened to her mind, it was wonderful to see how she did grasp and devour this blessed bread of life! It met a great void in her spiritual nature, and her soul exulted in it with exceeding joy.

You often feel these struggles. You know you need something more and higher; you cannot be satisfied with your present state; you are conscious something is wrong between your soul and God, and you have a deep conviction that you need more holiness. Why, then, do you not lay hold of this hope set before you in the gospel?

10. There is no rest short of being holy. Many try to find rest in something less, but they are sure to fail. They suspend further efforts, and would fain believe they shall have rest where they are; but all such hope is vain. There can be no rest short of coming into sympathy with God and into spiritual union with Jesus Christ.

11. Many insanely suppose that when they come to die, they shall be sanctified and prepared for heaven. Let us sit down by the bedside of such a man -- one who expects to be sanctified in death. What is he doing? What progress is he making? Would you speak kindly to him and inquire after his spiritual progress? But you must not allude to religion -- the doctor would not like to have you. He

says it might retard the man's recovery. He wants his mind to be perfectly quiet and unthinking. It will not do therefore even to whisper the name of Jesus! And is it supposable that this dying man is taking hold vigorously of that blessed name which you may not even whisper in his ear? Is he gaining the victory over the world by faith in the Lamb of God? Do you judge from what you see and hear that his soul is in a mighty struggle with the powers of selfishness and sin, a struggle in which faith in Jesus ensures the victory? Ah! he sinks -- he goes down, lower and lower; sometimes all consciousness seems to be lost; and can you think that, in these dying hours, his soul is entering into sympathy with Christ -- is bursting away from the bands of temptation, and taking hold, with a mighty grasp, of those exceeding great and precious promises? I do not ask you what you admit as to the possibility of miracles on a death-bed; but I ask if you think the circumstances are favourable for that mental effort which the nature of the case demands in renouncing sin and in receiving Jesus Christ by faith for sanctification.

12. No man has any right to hope unless he is really committed to holiness, and in all honesty and earnestness intends to live so. If he does not intend to live a holy life, let him know that he is not in the way to heaven. If he is in his sins and indulges himself in sinning, by what right or reason can he suppose himself travelling towards the abodes of infinite purity? If he hopes for heaven at the end of such a life, he is egregiously self-deceived.

Is not every person in this house most fully convinced that he must become holy if he would be saved? Notwithstanding all the looseness of your views on this subject, do you not know that you must be holy as you would find a home in heaven?

Do you believe that in any practical sense you really *can* become holy? Doubtless you do; for where would you be if you knew you *must* be holy and yet know equally well; that you *cannot* be? You are not in this dilemma. You cannot bring yourself to think that the ever blessed God has ever shut up his children in a dilemma so hopeless.

The case with you probably is that you know you ought to become holy, but you are not ready to be just now. If I should call on the younger classes, they would say, I have so much to do, how *can I?* Certainly I am not ready now. The middle-aged also are equally unprepared yet. The great evil is that men will not act on their own convictions. They *have* convictions; they know what they ought to do,

and what it is infinitely wicked for them *not* to do, yet they do it not. There they stop. They stop, not in the point of gospel rest, but in the point where impenitent sinners often stop, convicted of sin, but not acting up to their convictions of duty. Suppose one should come to you and try to hire you to make no further effort to become more holy; could you be hired to any such committal? It would effect you very much as it would have done when you were first convicted of sin, if some one had tried to hire you to defer all effort to come to Christ for a score of years longer. You would have cried out, "Get thee behind me, Satan, don't tempt me to sell my soul!" Satan took a more cunning course. He only said, "Waive it just now: let it lie over till you find a convenient season." So offered, the bait took, and you swallowed it; and so thousands are putting off their effort to become holy. You would be horror-stricken with the proposal to put off all effort to become holy for ten years longer; but the thought of putting over for an indefinite time, supposed to be not very long, does not startle you at all.

O my hearers, what shall the end be of such procrastination? May it not be that in your real heart you have no *love* of holiness, and have never sought it as the pearl of great price? Can it be well for you to go on still in a course that leads you farther every day from God? Will you forget that *he is holy*, and that, if you would behold his face in peace, you too *must become holy*.

XIX. ON SELF DENIAL.

"And he said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." -- Luke 9:23.

IN order to understand this solemn declaration of our Lord, the first important point to be ascertained is this, *What is the true idea of taking up the cross and denying one's self?*

This question presupposes the existence of appetites and propensities which call for indulgence, and then it means, obviously, that in some cases this indulgence must be refused. This is the precise point of the text -- a man who will follow Christ must deny himself in the sense of denying the gratification of all appetites and propensities whenever and how far so-ever such gratifications are forbidden by the law of benevolence. All impulses towards self-indulgence, whether in the line of avoiding things we fear or seeking things we love, must be denied, and ruled down by a determined will, whenever indulgence is not demanded, but is forbidden by the law of love. Within the limits of God's law, these constitutional appetites may be indulged; beyond those limits, they must be denied. At whatever point they run counter to the law of love to God or love to man, they must be put down.

The thing demanded, therefore, by this law of Christ's kingdom is that you consult and obey the will of Christ in this whole matter of self-indulgence; that you obey neither desire nor appetite -- that you never gratify your love of approbation -- never seek any forms of personal enjoyment *in disobedience to Christ. You* must never do this where duty is known, lest you displease God, for plainly He has rightful control over all your powers.

Under this principle you must do all your duty to your fellowmen -- whether to their bodies or to their souls, denying all those worldly desires and propensities which would conflict with this duty, making Jesus Christ Himself your model and his expressed will your perpetual rule.

The question will arise in many minds, Why does Christ demand of us self-denial?

Is it because God loves to see us self-mortified -- because He takes pleasure in crucifying the sensibilities to enjoyment which He has given us? By no means.

But the true answer is to be found in the fact that He has made us rational and moral beings -- our rational faculties being intended for the control of our entire voluntary activities, and our moral nature rendering us properly responsible for the self-control which God requires. In the lower orders of creation around us, we see animals void of moral responsibility because they are constituted irrational and incapable of responsible moral action. To them, propensity must be law, because they can know no other. But we have a higher law to obey than they. Their highest good is promoted by their obedience to mere physical law; but not so with us. Our sensibilities are blind, and therefore were never intended to be our rule of life. To supply such a rule, God has given us intelligence and conscience. Appetite, therefore, cannot be our rule, while it can and must be the rule of all the lower, irrational animals.

Now it is a fact that our sensibilities are out of harmony with our conscience, often clamoring for indulgence which both reason and conscience forbid.

If we give ourselves up to the sway of appetite and unguided sensibility, we are surely misled. These appetites grow worse by indulgence; a fact which of itself shows that God never intended them to be our rule. Often artificial appetites are formed; of such a nature, moreover, as to be exceedingly pernicious in their effects.

Hence we are thrown into a state of warfare. Constant appeals are made to us to arouse our propensities to indulgence; and, over against these, constant appeals are made by the law of God and the voice of our reason, urging us to deny ourselves and find our highest good in obeying God. God and reason require us to withstand the claims of appetite sternly and firmly. Note here that God does not require this withstanding, without vouchsafing his aid in the conflict. It is remarkable how the resolute opposition of any appetite, in the name of Christ can hinder the demands of conscience, will readily overcome it. Cases often occur in which the most clamorous and despotic of these artificial appetites are ruled down by the will, under the demands of conscience and with the help of God. At once they lie all subdued, and the mind remains in sweet peace.

Here let us consider more attentively that we are conscious of having a spiritual and moral nature as well as a physical. We have a conscience, and we have affections correlated to God as truly as we have affections correlated to earthly things. There is a beauty in holiness, and there are things correlated to our spiritual tastes as truly as to our physical. Under proper care and effort, our

religious nature may be developed towards God, even as our physical nature is towards earthly objects. We are social beings in our earthly relations, and not less so in our spiritual nature. We are social spiritually as well as physically, though we may not be aware of it, because our spiritual sociality may have been utterly uncultivated and undeveloped. But we really need divine communion with God and social fellowship with our Infinite Maker. Prior to regeneration this moral capacity of ours is a waste. All men have a conscience and may be aware of it, but they have no spiritual affections towards God, and hence they assume that religion must be a very dry thing. They cannot see how they can enjoy God's presence and prayer. They are all awake to earthly fellowship and friendship, but dead to fellowship and friendship with God. Their love in the form of affection has been drawn out towards man, but not towards God. They seem not aware that they have a nature capable of being developed in loving affections towards their divine Father. Hence they do not see how they can ever enjoy religion and religious duties. The coldness of death comes over their souls when they think of it.

This spiritual side of our nature needs to be cultivated. It has been so long kept back and crushed down, it greatly needs to be brought up. But, in order to do this and develop the spiritual side of our nature, it is indispensable that the worldly side be crushed and brought under. For flesh is a dangerous foe to grace. There is no harmony, but only repellency and antagonism between the earthly affections and the heavenly. Unless we subdue the flesh we shall die. It is only when, through the Spirit, we mortify the deeds of the body that we can live.

The Roman church has in past ages distinguished itself for its mortifications of the flesh -- externally considered. These mortifications have thrown off the Protestant world into the opposite extreme. Among all the Protestant sermons I have heard, I do not recollect one on the subject of bearing the cross and denying one's self. I must think that this subject is exceedingly neglected among our Protestant churches. Papal Rome having run wild with this idea, Protestants have taken fright and run off into the opposite extreme. Therefore we need a special effort to guard against this tendency and to bring us back to reason, sense, and Scripture.

Until I was converted I never knew that I had any religious affections. I did not even know that I had any capacity for spontaneous, deep, outgushing emotions towards God. This was indeed a dark and fearful ignorance, and you may readily

suppose I knew little of real joy while my soul was so perfectly ignorant of the very idea of real spiritual joy. But, I take it, this absence of all right ideas of God is by no means uncommon. If you search, you will find this to be the common experience of unconverted men.

We all know that the gratification of our animal nature is pleasure -- not of the highest sort indeed, yet it is a kind of pleasure. How much more must the gratification of our nobler moral affections be joyful! When the soul comes to feast on its spiritual affections, it begins to taste real happiness -- a bliss like that of heaven! I fear many have never comprehended what the Bible means by "*blessedness*."

Now let it be well considered that the spiritual side of our nature can be developed and gratified only by a benevolent crossing of our appetites -- a crossing of them, I mean, under the demands of real benevolence towards our fellowmen and towards God. This must be our aim; for if we make our personal happiness the end, we can never attain to the exalted joy of true fellowship with God.

It is curious to see how the sensibility is related to self-denial, so that denying ourselves from right motives becomes the natural and necessary means of developing our spiritual affections. Beginning with taking up the cross, one goes on, from step to step, ruling down self-indulgences and self-gratification, and opening his heart more and more to fellowship with God and to the riper experience of his love.

A further reason why men should deny themselves, is that it is *intrinsically right*. The lower appetites *ought not* to govern us; the higher laws of our nature ought to. The evidence of this is simply the evidence which proves it to be the duty of beings created rational to use their reason, and not degrade themselves down to the level of beasts.

Another reason is that we can well afford it, for we are surely the gainers by it. I admit that when we resist and deny the demands of self-indulgence, it goes a short way, and on a small scale, *against happiness; but* on the spiritual side we gain immensely, and immensely more than we lose. The satisfaction which arises from real self-denial is precious. It is rich in quality and deep and broad as the ocean in amount.

Many think that if they would find pleasure they must seek it directly and make it their direct object, seeking it moreover in the gratification of their appetites. They seem to know no other form of happiness but this. It would seem that they never have conceived the idea that the only way to enjoy themselves really is to deny self, fully up to the demands of right, reason, and of God's revealed will. Yet this is the most essential law of real happiness. Where shunning the cross begins, true religion ends. You may pray in your family, you may sternly rebuke sin wherever it is disagreeable to yourself, and do all this without Christian self-denial; but while living in habits of self-indulgence, you cannot stand up for Christ and do your duty everywhere manfully, and especially you will be all weakness when the path of duty leads you where your feelings will be wounded. And no man can expect to escape such emergencies always. If, then, you would maintain the path of duty without swerving, and enjoy real life and blessedness, you must determine to deny yourself wherever God and reason demand it, and fully up to the extent of those demands. So will you gain more than you can lose. If you are firm and determined, your path will be easy and joyous.

It often happens that the entire drift of a Christian's feelings is towards self-indulgence, so that if he allowed himself to be guided by his feelings he would surely make shipwreck of his soul. God, on his part, shuts him up to simple faith. Then if he follows the Lord's guidance, he will triumph, and all suddenly his "soul is like the chariots of Amminadab." A case in point is now before my mind of a man who once lived here. After a period of Christian life, he went from our place, backslid from God sorely, became almost an infidel, quite a Swedenborgian, became wealthy, and just when you might suppose him to have gained the heights of earthly happiness, and when he supposed so himself, he became, instead, completely wretched. He was forced to fall back upon himself, and say, I must return to God and do his will -- the whole of it, whatever it may be, or shall utterly perish. I will, said he, put an extinguisher upon every worldly affection. Nothing that is hostile to God's will shall be tolerated a moment. No sooner had he done this, than all his religious life and joys came back again. Then his wife and neighbors began to say of him, "He is indeed a new man in Christ Jesus." From that day, the peace of God ruled in his heart, and his cup of joy was full to overflowing. Any man, therefore, can afford to deny himself, since thereby he opens his heart to the joys of immortal life and peace. This is the only way of real happiness.

This subject explains many of the otherwise strange facts of Christian

experience. Here is one man who cannot pray before his family. Inquire more deeply into his case, and you will probably find that he cannot enjoy anything in religious duty. Inquire yet further into the cause, and you will find that he does not deny himself, but lives under the laws of self-indulgence. Poor man, he cannot please God so.

Another cannot come out and confess Christ before men. The truth probably is that he has not made up his mind to deny himself at all. On the contrary, he really denies Christ. He shuns the cross. Ah, that is not the way to heaven. In that path you can have no communion with God. Try it a thousand times, and you will still find the same result, no peace, and no communion with God.

Our text says, "Take up your cross *daily*." So you must. This is the only possible way of holy living. And it must be done firmly, sternly, and continually. It must be made your life-work, save as you gain a respite by substantial victory over your propensities to self-indulgence. Let a man attempt to rule down the appetite for alcoholic drinks, and do it at special seasons only, say once a day, or once in a week, while all the rest of the time he gives himself to full indulgence, he must utterly fail. He never can succeed unless he takes up his cross *daily* and bears it all the time. Absolutely he *must* persevere, or his efforts are all for naught. Precisely in proportion as we sternly take up our cross, it grows light and we grow strong to bear it. When a man indulges himself in tobacco, each day's indulgence makes him more a slave. On the contrary, each successive day's abstinence makes him more a conqueror. If a man resolutely declares, By the help of God, no lust, no appetite, shall have dominion over me, then, holding on, he comes off conqueror. The more firmly you adhere to this principle, and the more steadily you rule down the clamors for self-indulgence, so much the more speedily and surely do you gain the victory. Although at first you take up this work tremblingly, if you hold on, you will gain ground. These appetites will take less and less hold upon you. Bearing your cross will itself make you strong for your toil in the Christian life.

Shunning the cross grieves the Spirit. If you neglect duty, if you fail to pray in your family, omitting it perhaps because you have company present, you may be very sure the Spirit of God is grieved. Satan throws these temptations in your path, and you give him every advantage against you. You will perhaps try to pray while in this state; but, oh, God is not with you! You have been placed where you should have done some things unpleasant to flesh and blood; you evaded the

claims of present duty; you went to bed at night without doing your duty. How was it then with your soul? Did not dark clouds shut off the light of God's face?

Did you have any comfort of his presence? or any communion with your Saviour? Pause and ask your heart for the answer.

REMARKS.

1. So long as the religious sensibilities are not developed, men will of course feel a strong demand for worldly affections. What do they know about the religious affections of the heart? What do they know of real love to God, or of the consciousness of the Spirit's witness to their hearts that they are God's children? Really nothing. They have never crossed their sensual propensities. Of course they have not taken the first step towards developing the heavenly affections of the heart. Consequently all their enjoyments are earthly. Their hearts are only below. But just in proportion as they deny themselves do they fall into adjustment to their spiritual nature.

2. It is a great and blessed thing for the Christian to find his nature conformed progressively more and more to God; to find it manifestly coming around right, and adjusting itself, under divine grace, to the demands of benevolence.

3. Crossbearing, persisted in, brings out a ripe spiritual culture. The soul longs intensely for spiritual manifestations, and loves communion with God. Hear him say, How sweet the memory of those scenes when my soul lay low before God! How did my heart enjoy his presence! Now I am always sensible of an aching void unless God be there.

4. When men go about to seek enjoyment as an end, they surely miss it. All such seeking must certainly be in vain. Benevolence leads the soul out of itself, and sets it upon making others happy. So real blessedness comes.

5. Your usefulness as Christians will be as your crossbearing and as your firmness in this course of life; for your knowledge in spiritual things, your spiritual vitality, your communion with God and, all in one word, your aid from the Holy Ghost, must turn upon the fidelity with which you deny yourself

6. If you have once known the blessedness of spiritual life, and your heart has been moulded into the image of the heavenly, you can no longer return to the miserable flesh-pots of Egypt. There is no longer any possibility of your

enjoying earthly things as the portion of your soul. Let that be considered settled. Abandon at once and forever all further thought of finding your joys in worldly, selfish indulgences.

7. To the young, let me say, your sensibilities are quick, and lean to worldly things. Now is the time for you to be stern in dealing with your self-indulgent spirit before you have gone too far ever to succeed. Are you strongly tempted, to give way to self-indulgence? Remember it is an unalterable law of your nature that you must seek your peace and blessedness in God. You cannot find it elsewhere. You must have Jesus for your friend, or be eternally friendless. Your very nature demands that you seek God as your God -- the King of your life -- the Portion of your soul for happiness. You cannot find Him such to you, save as you deny yourself, take up your daily cross, and follow Jesus.

8. To those of you who, being yet in your sins, cannot conceive how you can ever enjoy God, and cannot even imagine how your heart can cleave to God, and call Him a thousand endearing names, and pour out your heart in love to Jesus, let me beg of you to consider that there *is* such communion with God -- there *is* such joy of his presence, and you may have it at the price of self-denial and whole-hearted devotion to Jesus; not otherwise. And why should you not make this choice? Already you are saying, Every cup of worldly pleasure is blasted -- dried up and worthless. Then let them go. Bid them away, and make the better choice of pleasures that are purer far, and better, and which endure forever.

XX. ON FOLLOWING CHRIST.

"Jesus saith unto him. If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me." -- John 21:22.

THESE words Christ spake to Peter. He had previously given Peter to understand that in his advanced life his liberty would be restrained, and that he would have the honor of glorifying God by a martyr's death. A question arose in Peter's mind -- more curious than wise -- how it would fare with his fellow-disciple, John. So he inquires "Lord, what shall this man do?" Gently rebuking this idle inquisitiveness, Jesus replied, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me."

This reply involves a principle, and hence it has a wide practical application. It is really addressed to us.

Assuming it to be thus addressed to all at the present day, what does it teach? What does Jesus say to *us?*

Suppose He stood where I do this moment, and you knew it to be Jesus Himself, and saw that He was preparing to speak. You see the halo of glory around his head; you note the blending of meekness and majesty that identifies Him most fully as one like unto the Son of God, and your whole soul is moved within you to catch every word He may utter. Oh, what an earnest expectation! If He were to speak in this house, you would hear the ticking of that clock more plainly than you now do. If you chanced not to catch every word distinctly, you would ask one and another, What did He say? What was that?

He speaks, you observe, in the form of a positive command; what is this command? Remember, if it be the Lord Jesus Christ, He has the *right* to command. Who else in earth or heaven has this right more absolutely than He? It must be of the utmost consequence to us to know what He does command us. Whatever it be, it must vitally affect our well-being both to know and to do it. Words from one so benevolent must be for our good. Certainly, He never did speak but He said things for the good of those to whom He spake.

It must also be for the general good; for the Great King and Lord of all never overlooks what pertains to the general good.

Moreover, it must be safe to obey. Certainly; how can it be otherwise? Did it ever happen that any man obeyed Him and found it unsafe?

Of course it must be our DUTY to obey. How can it be that Christ shall ever command us, and we be not bound solemnly to obey Him?

Also, it must be *possible* for us to obey. Did Christ ever enjoin impracticable things? Could He possibly do a thing so unreasonable?

All these points must be assumed and admitted. How can we ever doubt a moment on any one of them?

This, then, is the state of the case. What, now, should be the attitude of our minds? Manifestly this, Let Him speak; we will surely listen and obey. What does He say? Every word He says, I know, will be infinitely good. Let me catch every intimation of his will. "His words shall be sweeter to my taste than honey or the honey-comb."

But will any of you turn away, saying, "I don't care what He says?" Will you not rather feel this, "Let Him say what He will, it is all good, and I will surely hear and obey it?"

If such be your attitude towards Him, then we are ready to examine what He says. Observe, He gives us *something to be done*, and, moreover, something to be *done* by yourself. No matter just now to you what others may do, or what God's providence may allot to them. "What is that to thee?" It has always been the temptation of the human heart to look at the duties of others rather than one's own. You must resist and put down this temptation. Christ has work *for you* to do, and it becomes you to address yourself earnestly to do it. Observe, also, that it is to be done *now*. He gives you no furlough, not even to go home and bid farewell to those of your house. He can take no excuse for delay.

Now let us ask, What is this thing which He requires? He says, "*Follow thou Me*." What does this mean? Must I leave my home? Must I abandon my business? Am I to change my residence? Am I to follow Him all over the land?

The latter meaning was plainly the true one when Jesus dwelt among men in human flesh. He then called certain men to follow Him as his servants and disciples, and they were to attend Him in all his journeyings -- to go where He went and to stop where He stopped. They were to aid Him in his missionary

work.

Now, Christ is no longer here in human flesh; and therefore following Him cannot have precisely that physical sense. Yet now, no less than then, it implies that you obey his revealed will, and do the things that please Him. Now, you are to imitate his example and follow his instructions. By various methods, He still makes known his will and you are to follow whithersoever He leads. You must accept Him as the Captain of your salvation, and let his laws control all your life. He comes to save his people from their sins and from the ruin that sin, unforgiven, must bring down; and you must accept Him as such a Saviour. This is involved in following Him.

But let us here inquire somewhat more fully, *What is implied in obeying this command?*

Of course it implies confidence in Him who commands -- a confidence in the exercise of which you commit yourself fully to obey Him and trust all consequences to his disposal: There can be no hearty, cheerful obedience without this implicit confidence.

It implies, also, a willingness to be saved by Him, that is, *saved from sin*. You make no reservation of favorite indulgences; you go against all sin and set yourself earnestly to withstand every sort of temptation.

It involves also a present decision to follow Him through evil or good report -- whatever the effect may be on your reputation. You are ready to make sacrifices for Christ, rejoicing to be counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

It is a very common fault to admit what Christ requires, yet to fail very much in doing it. This is saying, I go, sir, but going not. Such a man does not follow Christ.

He requires *immediate* action. He has work for you to do *today*, and He demands of you that you commit yourself to full obedience.

Let us next inquire, WHY *shall we follow Him?*

Suppose Christ were here personally and from this desk announced this command, Follow thou Me. Would you ask to know *why?* You could very soon assign some weighty reasons. Your own mind would suggest them. And do you

know any reasons why you should *not* follow Him? I presume it is settled in every mind why you should obey this command, now and here, without one moment's delay. Is there any of you that can assign any reason why you should not obey this command? Does any of you doubt at all whether this be your duty? Can you think of any reason why it is not?

Then it must be your duty, and you ought to do it. The matter should lie in your mind thus, If this is my duty, of course I must do it at once. Doing duty is the business of my life.

You owe it to Jesus Christ to follow Him. If you are a student, none the less should you follow Jesus everywhere. See that young man. You ask him why he goes to college; what does he say? Does he say, Because I would be better prepared to teach men about Jesus Christ? Coming to his teachers, does he say, Give me an education, give me all the discipline of mind and heart you can, that I may be the better able to teach and preach Jesus Christ? Tell me all you know of Christ; pray for me that God may teach my heart the whole gospel; is this what he says? In this sort of way should a Christian student follow Christ.

Do you not owe this to Him? Can any one of you deny this? Have you any right to live to yourselves? If you could gain some good for the moment, could you think it *right* to have your own way, and disown Christ? What if you were to gain the whole world and lose your own soul?

You owe it to yourself to take care of your own soul. God lays on you the responsibility of saving your own soul, and you must bear it. No man can bear that responsibility for you. You must bear it for yourself alone.

You owe it to your friends to follow Christ. You have friends over whom you may exert a precious influence. For their sakes you ought to know Christ, that you may lead them also to follow Him. You have friends also who have done much for you and have loved you much. It is due from you to them that you should follow Christ. You owe it to your father and mother. Are they praying souls? It is due to the sympathy they feel for you and to the strong desire they have for your salvation. If they have never prayed, it is time they did, and time that you should lead them to Christ.

You owe it to the whole world. There are millions who know not Jesus, some of whom you might teach so that they shall not die and never have known Him.

One more thought as to yourself. Such as you make yourself by obeying or not obeying this precept, you will be to all eternity. What you do in this matter will have its fruits on your destiny long after the sun and stars shall have faded away. You have no right to live so that, when you die, men shall say, There goes from earth one nuisance, and hell has more sin in it now than it ever had before.

Again: this is the only path of peace. If you would have peace, you must seek and find it here. Here thousands have found it; but none ever found it anywhere else.

Jesus Christ says to you, "*Follow thou me*." Will you set yourself to find some excuse? What are your excuses?

Do you say, "There are so many opinions among men, I do not know what to do?"

Ah! but you *do know*. It is only a pitiful pretence when you say you don't know your duty. Who of you does not know enough to be simple-hearted and to go on in duty and please God? No opinions of men need stumble you if you simply follow Christ. You talk about the various opinions among Christian sects; but, differ much as they may in lesser matters, on the great things of salvation they are all agreed. They all agree essentially, that to follow Christ in confidence and simple love is the whole of duty, and will ensure his approbation. Follow this simple direction, and all will be well with you.

But some will say, "I believe all will be saved."

You do, indeed! Will they all become like Christ before they die? Do they all in fact become holy in this world? Christ is in heaven. Can you go there unless you become first like Him in heart and in life?

What is such a belief good for? Often has this question been forced on my mind in Boston, What is this belief that all men will be saved good for? People plead this belief as their excuse for not following Christ. They say, "No need to trouble ourselves with following Christ, since we shall all come right at last anyhow." Can this belief make men holy and happy? Some of you will answer, "It makes me happy for the present, and that is the most I care for." But does it make you *holy?* Does it beget true Christian self-denial and real benevolence? A faith and a practice which make you happy without being holy are but a poor thing. Indeed, it cannot fail of being utterly mischievous, because it lures and pleases without

the least advance towards saving your soul. It only leaves you the more a slave of sin and Satan.

But you say, "It makes me so miserable to believe that any will be forever lost!"

What then? What if it does make you feel unhappy? It may make you unhappy to see your guilty friend sent to the penitentiary or the gallows now; but such a doom may be none the less deserved -- none the less certain, because it hurts your feelings.

How can there be any other way of final happiness save through real holiness? The fountain of all happiness must lie in your own soul. If that is renewed to holiness and made unselfish, loving, forgiving, humble -- then you will be happy of course, but you cannot be happy without such a character.

Some of you may say, "I don't believe in the necessity of a change of heart."

Yes, you do; you are altogether mistaken in regard to the matter, if you suppose you don't believe in the necessity of a change of heart. There cannot be such a man in all Christendom -- a man who does not know that by nature his heart is not right with God, yet that it must become right with God before he can enjoy God's presence in heaven. Is there one whose conscience does not testify that, before conversion, his heart is alienated from God? Do you not know that you are unlike God in spirit? and that you must be changed so as to become like God before you can enjoy Him? What! a sinner, knowing himself to be a sinner, believe he can be happy in God's presence without a radical moral change? Impossible! Every man knows that the sinner, out of sympathy with God, must be changed before he can enjoy God's presence and love. Every man, unchanged by God's grace, knows himself to be a sinner and not holy by nature.

A case in point to show the force of truth on even hardened hearts came lately to my knowledge. A Christian lady, being on a visit to one of the towns in Canada, was called on by a gentleman of high standing in society, but who had always lived a prayerless, ungodly life. A man of strong will and nerves, professedly a sceptic, he yet took the ground before this Christian lady that he was ready, as a means of becoming a Christian, to do anything that she should say. "Well, then," said she, "kneel down here, and cry out, 'God, be merciful to me, a, sinner.'" "What!" replied he, "do this when I don't believe myself a sinner." "You need not excuse yourself on that ground," said she, "for *you* know you are a sinner."

Having passed his word of honor to a lady, he could not draw back, and therefore kneeled and repeated the proposed words. Arising, he asked, "What next?" "Do so again, and say the same words." He raised the old objection, "I don't believe myself a sinner." She made the same answer as before, and a second time he repeated the words of that prayer. The same things were said -- the same things done, the third time, and then, hardened as he was, his heart felt the force of those words, and he began to cry in earnest, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" His heart broke, and he prayed till mercy came!

So often, when men say they don't believe this and that, they *do believe it* so far as conviction is concerned. *They know the truth* respecting their own guilt.

But you plead, perhaps, this: I must attend to other duties first; my studies, or my business.

No, my friend; no other duties can come before this. This is the greatest duty and ought to be the first. Hear what the Saviour said on this very point. He said to one man "Follow Me;" and he answered, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." This is a strong case, and is placed on record for our instruction because it is strong. It may seem to you very unnatural that Jesus would call any man away from a duty so obvious and so inborn in every human heart; yet what did He say? He gave no heed to this plea, but answered, "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Not even the last rites of burial to the dead must be allowed to stand before obedience to Christ's call. No doubt Christ saw a disposition in this man to *plead* off, and therefore He saw the necessity of meeting it promptly. Suppose the man had said at first, "Yes, Lord, I am ready; my father lies unburied; but I am ready, if Thou callest me, to follow Thee even now;" it is at least supposable, if not probable, that Jesus would have answered, Yes; I will go with thee to that funeral. Let us lay the dead solemnly in their last bed, and then go to our preaching.

Another man replied to his call, saying, "Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go and bid them farewell which are at home in my house." To him, Jesus replied, "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Thus Christ teaches that no duty can possibly come before this of giving up your heart to follow Him. You must make up your mind fully to this life-business, and really enter upon it. All things else are only an offence to God.

Do you say, I must study? You must first make up your mind to do all for Christ, else study can be no acceptable duty. When Jesus says to you, "My son, give Me thy heart," He wants nothing else instead of your heart. He does not wish to be put off with some other duty than the very one He calls for. When He says, "Follow Me," He demands an explicit answer, whether you will or no, and he cannot accept anything evasive.

REMARKS.

1. You are now, each one of you, called to follow Christ, with the implied pledge on his part, that if you give yourself to him, he will give himself to you. Think of that. Would it not be a blessed thing to have Christ give himself to you, to be your eternal Friend -- your portion and joy for ever?

Suppose Jesus were passing along here, and were calling one and another by name to follow him. When he came near you, would you not be saying in your heart, I hope he will certainly call me? Or can it be you would say, I hope he will *not* call me? Can it be *you could* say that? Would you not rather say, Oh, is it possible he will pass me by; how awful! Can it be? And if so, shall I never see him passing by so near again?

O sinner, Jesus *is* now passing by you, *so near*; arise and speak to him, for he does call you; and you must decide now whether you follow him or not, and decide for eternity!

2. Don't think about others. Say not, as Peter said, "Lord, what shall this man do?" This is an old and artful device of your adversary -- this turning your mind to think about others. If you are wise, you will think about yourself only.

3. It is a great comfort to reach the point where you say, I will follow him. anyhow: let others do as they please; I will go after Christ. This is just what you should say; and when you come to this point with a full heart, you will find it is a most precious decision.

4. You are now called to decide your own future destiny. Some decision upon it you will certainly make. You take a step here today which may decide all your future being. Is it not well that you take this step right?

Suppose I should now say, Come, separate yourselves according to the decision you make. All ye who will follow Christ, come into this aisle; what *will you do?*

Will you refuse and say, I will not follow Christ yet; I have ends of my own to accomplish first: I will not be his servant now? Is this your decision? Shall we ask to have it put on record? *It will go on record anyhow, whether you ask it or not*.

Some of you will perhaps say, I will not decide just now. I did not come here today expecting to decide so great a question at this time.

What, indeed! Did not you expect to hear a gospel sermon today? And did not you know that in every gospel sermon there is, in fact, a gospel call on you to repent and follow Jesus?

But will you now turn again and say, "Lord, I can't understand, I cannot realise, why I should follow thee?" Don't say that; for you can understand it. And you can decide this question today.

But, says some young man, if I should go after him, I am afraid I should have to forego some of my favourite plans for life. I might have to give up my intended profession. Another might be debarred from some lucrative business that pays better than following Christ.

Then you can go and tell your Saviour so. Tell him how the case lies. Tell him you cannot trust him to provide for your worldly interests. You are afraid he would send you also to preach the kingdom of God, and might pay you but poorly for your services. Perhaps he will excuse you from his service here and from entering into the joy of your Lord hereafter besides!

There is a young man who says, I can't follow Christ now, because I cannot leave my dear Christian mother. Then go upon your knees and spread out your excuse before the Lord. Say to him, My good mother gave me the best Christian instruction and her constant prayers; she did everything to make me thy servant: but now, since thou art calling me to follow thee, I find I cannot go and preach thy love to a dying world. She cannot spare me and I cannot leave her.

Indeed, you cannot afford to. And your pious mother thinks her claim is above that of the Saviour! Well, you must both make your choice.

XXI. CONDITIONS OF PREVAILING PRAYER.

"Ask, and it shall be given you." -- Matt. 7:7, 8.

"Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts." -- James 4:3.

I PROPOSE to consider the conditions of prevailing prayer.

The first condition is a state of mind in which you would offer the Lord's Prayer sincerely and acceptably.

Christ at their request taught his disciples how to pray. In doing so, he gave them an epitome of the appropriate subjects of prayer, and also threw a most important light upon the *spirit* with which all prayer should be offered. This form is exceedingly comprehensive. Every word is full of meaning. It would seem very obvious, however, that our Lord did not intend here to specify all the particular things we may pray for, but only to group together some of the great heads of subjects which are appropriate to be sought of God in prayer, and also to show us with what temper and spirit we should come before the Lord.

This is evidently not designed as a mere form, to be used always and without variation. It cannot be that Christ intended we should evermore use these words in prayer, and no other words; for he never again used these precise words himself, so far as we know from the sacred record, but did often use other and very different words, as the Scriptures abundantly testify.

But this form answers a most admirable purpose if we understand it to be given us to teach us these two most important things; namely, what sort of blessings we may pray for, and in what spirit we should pray for them.

Most surely, then, we cannot hope to pray acceptably unless we can offer this prayer in its real *spirit* -- *our* own hearts deeply sympathising with the spirit of this prayer. If we cannot pray the Lord's Prayer sincerely, we cannot offer any acceptable prayer at all.

Hence it becomes us to examine carefully the words of this recorded form of prayer. Yet be it remembered, it is not these words, as mere words, that God regards, or that we should value. Words themselves, apart from their meaning, and from their meaning *as used by us*, would neither please nor displease God.

He looks on the heart.

Let us now refer to the Lord's Prayer, and to the connection in which it stands.

"When ye pray," says our Lord, "use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

Hence there is no need that you continue to clamour unceasingly, "O Baal, hear us; O Baal, hear us." Those were indeed vain repetitions just such as the heathen use. It is a most singular fact that the Roman Catholic church has fallen into the practice here condemned. Like the priests of Baal, in Elijah's time, they demand and practise everlasting repetitions of the same words, numbering their repetitions of Paternosters and Ave Marias by their beads, and estimating the merit of prayer by the quantity, and not the quality, of their prayers. The more repetitions, the greater the value. This principle, and the practice founded upon it, our Saviour most pointedly condemns.

So, many persons, not Roman Catholics or heathen, seem to lay much more stress upon the *amount of* prayer than upon its character and quality. They think if there can only be prayer enough, that is, repetitions enough of the same or similar words, the prayer will be certainly effective, and prevalent with God. No mistake can be greater. The entire word of God rebukes this view of the subject in the most pointed manner.

Yet, be it well considered, the precept "Use not vain repetitions," should by no means be construed to discourage the utmost perseverance and fervency of spirit in prayer. The passage does not forbid our renewing our requests from great earnestness of spirit. Our Lord himself did this in the garden, repeating his supplication "in the same words." *Vain* repetitions are what is forbidden; not repetitions which gush from a burdened spirit.

This form of prayer invites us, first of all, to address the great God as "*Our Father who art in heaven*." This authorises us to come as children and address the Most High, feeling that he is a *Father to us*.

The first petition follows, "*Hallowed be thy name*." What is the exact idea of this language? To hallow is to sanctify; to deem and render *sacred*.

There is a passage in Peter's Epistle which may throw light on this.

He says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." The meaning seems plainly to be this: Set apart the Lord God in your hearts as the only true object of supreme, eternal adoration, worship, and praise. Place him alone on the throne of your hearts. Let him be the only hallowed object there.

So here, in the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, we pray that both ourselves and all intelligent beings may in this sense hallow the name of the Lord God and sanctify him in their hearts. Our prayer is, Let all adore thee -- the infinite Father -- as the only object of universal adoration, praise, worship, and love.

This prayer hence implies:

1. A desire that this hallowing of Jehovah's name should be universal.

2. A willingness to concur heartily ourselves in this sentiment. Our own hearts are in deep sympathy with it. Our inmost souls cry out, Let God be honoured, adored, loved, worshipped, and revered by all on earth and all in heaven. Of course, praying in this spirit, we shall have the highest reverence for God. Beginning our prayer thus, it will so far be acceptable to God. Without such reverence for Jehovah's name, no prayer can possibly be acceptable. All irreverent praying is mockery, most abhorrent to the pure and exalted Jehovah.

"*Thy kingdom come*." What does this language imply?

1. A desire that God's kingdom should be set up in the world, and all men become holy. The will is set upon this as the highest and most to be desired of all objects whatever. It becomes the supreme desire of the soul, and all other things sink into comparative insignificance before it. The mind and the judgment approve and delight in the kingdom of God as in itself infinitely excellent, and then the will harmonises most perfectly with this decision of intelligence.

Let it be well observed here that our Lord, in giving this form of prayer, assumes throughout that we shall use all this language with most profound sincerity. If any man were to use these words, and reject their spirit from his heart, his prayer would be an utter abomination before God. Whoever would pray at all, should consider that God looks on the heart, and is a *holy God*.

2. It is implied in this petition that the suppliant *does* what he can to establish this kingdom. He is actually doing all he can to promote this great end for which he prays. Else he fails entirely of evincing his sincerity. For nothing can be more

sure than that every man who prays sincerely for the coming of Jehovah's kingdom, truly desires and wills that it may come; and if so, he will neglect no means in his power to promote and hasten its coming. Hence every man who sincerely offers this petition will lay himself out to promote the object. He will seek by every means to make the truth of God universally prevalent and triumphant.

3. I might also say that the sincere offering of this petition implies a resistance of everything inconsistent with the coming of this kingdom. This you cannot fail to understand.

We now pass to the next petition, "*Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven*."

This petition implies that we desire to have God's will done, and that this desire is supreme.

It implies also a delight in having the will of God done by all his creatures, and a corresponding sorrow whenever it fails of being done by any intelligent being.

There is also implied a state of the will in harmony with this desire. A man whose will is averse to having his own desires granted is insincere, even although his desires are real. Such a man is not honest and consistent with himself.

In general, I remark, respecting this petition, that if it be offered sincerely, the following things must be true:

1. The suppliant is willing that God should require all he does, and *as* he does. His heart will acquiesce both in the things required and in the manner in which God requires them. It would indeed be strange that a man should pray sincerely that God's will might be done, and yet not be willing himself that God should give law, or carry his will into effect. Such inconsistencies never can happen where the heart is truly sincere and honest before God. No, never. The honest-hearted suppliant is as willing that God's will should be done as the saints in heaven are. He delights in having it done, more than in all riches -- more than in his highest earthly joy.

2. When a man offers this petition sincerely it is implied that he is really doing, himself, all the known will of God. For if he is acting contrary to his actual knowledge of God's will, it is most certain that he is not sincere in praying that

God's will may be done. If he sincerely desires and is willing that God's will should be done, why does he not do it himself?

3. It implies a willingness that God should use his own discretion in the affairs of the universe, and just as really and fully in this world as in heaven itself You all admit that in heaven God exercises a holy sovereignty. I do not mean by this, an arbitrary, unreasonable sovereignty, but I mean a control of all things according to his own infinite wisdom and love -- exercising evermore his own discretion, and depending on the counsel of none but himself. Thus God reigns in heaven.

You also see that in heaven, all created beings exercise the most perfect submission and confidence in God. They all allow him to carry out his own plans, framed in wisdom and love, and they even rejoice with exceeding joy that he does. It is their highest blessedness.

Such is the state of feeling towards God universally in heaven.

And such it should be on earth. The man who offers this petition sincerely must approximate very closely to the state of mind which obtains in heaven.

He will rejoice that God appoints all things as he pleases, and that all beings should be, and do, and suffer as God ordains. If man has not such confidence in God as to be willing that he should control all events respecting his own family, his friends, all his interests, in short for time and eternity, then certainly his heart is not submissive to God, and it is hypocrisy for him to pray that God's will may be done on earth as in heaven. It must be hypocrisy in him, because his own heart rebels against the sentiment of his own words.

This petition offered honestly, implies nothing less than universal, unqualified submission to God. The heart really submits, and delights in its submission.

No thought is so truly pleasing as that of having God's will done evermore. A sincere offering of this prayer, or indeed of any prayer whatever, involves the fullest possible submission of all events, for time and for eternity, to the hands of God. All real prayer puts God on the throne of the universe, and the suppliant low before him at his footstool.

4. The offering of this petition sincerely implies conformity of life to this state of the will. You will readily see that this must be the case, because the will governs the outward life by a law of necessity. The action of this law must be universal

so long as man remains a voluntary moral agent. So long, therefore, the ultimate purpose of the will must control the outward life.

Hence the man who offers this prayer acceptably must live *as he prays*; must live according to his own prayers. It would be a strange and most unaccountable thing, indeed, if the heart should be in a state to offer this prayer sincerely, and yet should act itself out in the life directly contrary to its own expressed and supreme preference and purpose.

Such a case is impossible. The very supposition involves the absurdity of assuming that a man's supreme preference shall not control his outward life.

In saying this, however, I do not deny that a man's state of mind may change, so as to differ the next hour from what it is this. He may be in a state one hour to offer this prayer acceptably, and the next hour may act in a manner right over against his prayer.

But if in this latter hour you could know the state of his will, you would find that it is not such that he can pray acceptably, "Thy will be done." No; his will is so changed as to conform to what you see in his outward life.

Hence a man's state of heart may be to some extent known from his external actions. You may at least know that his heart does not sincerely offer this prayer if his life does not conform to the known will of God.

We pass to the next petition, "*Give us this day our daily bread*."

It is plain that this implies dependence on God for all the favours and mercies we either possess or need.

The petition is remarkably comprehensive. It names only bread, and only the bread for "*this day*"; yet none can doubt that it was designed to include also our water and our needful clothing -- whatever we really need for our highest health, and usefulness, and enjoyment on earth. For all these we look to God.

Our Saviour doubtless meant to give us in general *the subjects* of prayer, showing us for what things it is proper for us to pray and also the spirit with which we should pray. These are plainly the two great points which he aimed chiefly to illustrate in this remarkable form of prayer.

Whoever offers this petition sincerely, is in a state of mind to recognise and

gratefully acknowledge the providence of God. He sees the hand of God in all the circumstances that affect his earthly state. The rain and the sunshine -- the winds and the frosts, he sees coming, all of them, from the hand of his own Father. Hence he looks up in the spirit of a child saying, "Give me this day my daily bread."

But there are those who philosophise and speculate themselves entirely out of this filial dependence on God. They arrive at such ideas of the magnitude of the universe that it becomes in their view too great for God to govern by a minute attention to particular events. Hence they see no God, other than an unknowing Nature in the ordinary processes of vegetation, or in the laws that control animal life. A certain indefinable but unintelligent power, which they call Nature, does it all. Hence they do not expect God to hear their prayers, or notice their wants. Nature will move on in its own determined channel whether they pray or restrain prayer.

Now men who hold such opinions cannot pray the Lord's Prayer without the most glaring hypocrisy. How can they offer this prayer and mean anything by it, if they truly believe that everything is nailed down to a fixed chain of events, in which no regard is had or can be had to the prayers or wants of man?

Surely, nothing is more plain than that this prayer recognises most fully the universal providence of that same infinite Father who gives us the promises, and who invites us to plead them for obtaining all the blessings we can ever need.

It practically recognises God as Ruler over all.

What if a man should offer this prayer, but should add to it an appendix of this sort, "Lord, although we ask of thee our daily bread, yet thou knowest we do not believe thou hast anything at all to do with giving us each day our daily bread; for we believe thou art too high, and thy universe too large, to admit of our supposing that thou canst attend to so small a matter as supplying our daily food. We believe that thou art so unchangeable, and the laws of nature are so fixed, that no regard can possibly be had to our prayers or our wants."

Now would this style of prayer correspond with the petitions given us by Christ, or with their obvious spirit?

Plainly this prayer dictated by our Lord for us, implies a state of heart that leans upon God for everything -- for even the most minute things that can possibly

affect our happiness or be to us objects of desire. The mind looks up to the great God, expecting from him, and from him alone, every good and perfect gift. For everything we need, our eye turns naturally and spontaneously towards our great Father.

And this is a *daily* dependence. The state of mind which it implies is habitual.

We must pass now to the next petition, "*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*."

In this immediate connection, the Saviour says, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." The word "trespasses" therefore, doubtless explains what is meant by debts in the Lord's Prayer. Luke, in reciting this Lord's Prayer, has it, "Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us."

These various forms of expression serve to make the meaning quite plain. It may often happen that in such a world as this, some of my fellowmen may wrong or at least offend me -- in some such way as I wrong and displease God. In such cases this petition of the Lord's Prayer implies that I forgive those who injure me, even as I pray to be forgiven myself.

The phraseology in Matthew makes the fact that we forgive others either the measure or the condition of our being forgiven; while, as given by Luke, it seems to be at least a condition, if not a ground or reason, of the request for personal forgiveness. The former reads "Forgive us *as* we forgive," etc., and the latter, "Forgive us, *for* we also forgive every one indebted to us."

Now on this petition I remark:

1. It cannot possibly imply that God will forgive us our sins *while we are still committing them*. Suppose one should use this form of petition: "Lord, forgive me for having injured thee as thou knowest that I do most freely forgive all men who injure me;" while yet it is perfectly apparent to the man himself and to everybody else that he is still injuring and abusing God as much as ever. Would not such a course be equivalent to saying "Lord, I am very careful, thou seest, not to injure my fellowmen, and I freely forgive their wrongs against me; but I care not how much I abuse and wrong thee?" This would be horrible! Yet this horrible prayer is virtually invoked whenever men ask of God forgiveness with

the spirit of sin and rebellion in their hearts.

2. This petition never reads thus, "Forgive us our sins and *enable* us to forgive others also." This would be a most abominable prayer to offer to God; certainly, if it be understood to imply that we cannot forgive others unless we are specially enabled to do so by power given us in answer to prayer; and worse still, if this inability to forgive is imputed to God as its Author.

However the phraseology be explained, and whatever it be understood to imply, it is common enough in the mouths of men; but nowhere found in the book of God.

3. Christ, on the other hand, says, Forgive us as we forgive others. We have often injured, abused, and wronged thee. Our fellowmen have also often injured us, but thou knowest we have freely forgiven them. Now, therefore, forgive us *as* thou seest we have forgiven others. If thou seest that we do forgive others, then do thou indeed forgive us, and not otherwise. We cannot ask to be ourselves forgiven on any other condition.

4. Many seem to consider themselves quite pious if they can put up with it when they are injured or slighted; if they can possibly control themselves so as not to break out into a passion. If, however, they are really wronged, they imagine they do well to be angry. Oh, to be sure! somebody has really wronged them, and shall they not resent it, and study how to get revenge, or, at least, redress? But mark: the apostle Peter says, "If when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." "For even hereunto were ye called," as if all Christians had received a special call to this holy example. Oh, how would such an example rebuke the spirit of the world!

5. It is one remarkable condition of being answered in prayer that we suffer ourselves to harbour no ill-will to any human being. We must forgive all that wrong us, and forgive them too *from the heart*. God as really requires us to love our enemies as to love our friends, as really requires us to forgive others as to ask forgiveness for ourselves. Do we always bear this in mind? Are you, beloved, always careful to see to it that your state of mind towards all who may possibly have wronged you is one of real forgiveness, and do you never think of coming to God in prayer until you are sure you have a forgiving spirit yourself?

Plainly, this is one of the ways in which we may test our fitness of heart to

prevail with God in prayer. "When thou standest, praying, forgive, if thou hast aught against any." Think not to gain audience before God unless thou dost most fully and heartily forgive all who may be thought to have wronged thee.

Sometimes persons of a peculiar temperament lay up grudges against others. They have enemies, against whom they not only speak evil, but know not how to speak well. Now such persons who harbour such grudges in their hearts, can no more prevail with God in prayer than the devil can. God would as soon hear the devil pray and answer his prayers as hear and answer them. They need not think to be heard; not they!

How many times have I had occasion to rebuke this unforgiving spirit! Often, while in a place labouring to promote a revival, I have seen the workings of this jealous, unforgiving spirit, and I have felt like saying, Take these things hence! Why do you get up a prayer-meeting and think to pray to God when you know that you hate your brother; and know moreover that I know you do? Away with it! Let such professed Christians repent, break down, get into the dust at the feet of God, and men too, before they think to pray acceptably! Until they do thus repent, all their prayers are only a "smoke in the nose" before God.

Our next petition is, "*Lead us not into temptation*."

And what is implied in this?

A fear and dread of sin; a watchfulness against temptation; an anxious solicitude lest by any means we should be overcome and fall into sin. On this point Christ often warned his disciples, and not them only, but, what he said unto them, he said unto all, -- "*Watch*."

A man not afraid of sin and temptation cannot present this petition in a manner acceptable to God.

You will observe, moreover, that this petition does not by any means imply that God leads men into temptation in order to make them sin, so that we must needs implore of him not to lead us thus, lest he should do it. No, that is not implied at all; but the spirit of the petition is this, O Lord, thou knowest how weak I am, and how prone to sin; therefore let thy providence guard and keep me that I may not indulge in anything whatever that may prove to me a temptation to sin. Deliver us from all iniquity -- from all the stratagems of the devil. Throw around us all thy precious guardianship, that we may be kept from sinning against thee.

How needful this protection, and how fit that we should pray for it without ceasing!

This form of prayer concludes, "*For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen*."

Here is an acknowledgment of the universal government of God. The suppliant recognises his supremacy and rejoices in it.

Thus it is when the mind is in the attitude of prevailing prayer. It is most perfectly natural then for us to regard the character, attributes, and kingdom of God as infinitely sacred and glorious.

How perfectly spontaneous is this feeling in the heart of all who really pray, "I ask all this because thou art a powerful, universal, and holy Sovereign. Thou art the infinite Source of all blessings. Unto thee, therefore, do I look for all needed good, either for myself or my fellow-beings!"

How deeply does the praying heart realise and rejoice in the universal supremacy of the great Jehovah!

All power, and glory, and dominion are thine, and thine only, for ever and ever. Amen and amen. Let my whole soul re-echo, Amen. Let the power and the glory be the Lord's alone for evermore. Let my soul for ever feel and utter this sentiment with its deepest and most fervent emphasis. Let God reign supreme and adored through all earth and all heaven, henceforth and for ever.

All power, and glory, and dominion are thine, and thine only, for ever and ever. Amen and amen. Let my whole soul re-echo, Amen. Let the power and the glory be the Lord's alone for evermore. Let my soul for ever feel and utter this sentiment with its deepest and most fervent emphasis. Let God reign supreme and adored through all earth and all heaven, henceforth and for ever.

REMARKS.

1. The state of mind involved in this prayer must be connected with a holy life. Most manifestly it can never co-exist with a sinning life. If you allow yourself in sin, you certainly cannot have access to God in prayer; you cannot enter into the spirit of the Lord's Prayer and appropriately utter its petitions.

2. The appropriate offering of this prayer involves a corresponding sensibility --

a state of feeling in harmony with it. The mind of the suppliant must sympathise with the spirit of this form of prayer. Otherwise he does, by no means, make this prayer his own.

3. It is nothing better than mockery to use the Lord's Prayer as a mere form. So multitudes do use it, especially when public worship is conducted by the use of forms of prayer. Often you may hear this form of prayer repeated, over and over, in such a way as seems to testify that the mind takes no cognisance of the sentiments which the words should express. The chattering of a parrot could scarcely be more senseless and void of impression on the speaker's mind. How shocking to hear the Lord's Prayer chattered over thus! Instead of spreading out before God what they really need, they run over the words of this form, and perhaps of some other set forms, as if the utterance of the right words served to constitute acceptable prayer!

If they had gone into the streets and cursed and swore by the hour, every man of them would be horribly shocked, and would feel that now assuredly the curse of Jehovah would fall upon them. But in their senseless chattering of this form of prayer by the hour together, they as truly blaspheme God as if they had taken his name in vain in any other way.

Men may mock God in pretending to pray, as truly as in cursing and swearing. God looks on the heart, and he estimates nothing as real prayer into which the heart does not enter. And for many reasons it must be peculiarly provoking to God to have the forms of prayer gone through with and no heart of prayer attend them.

Prayer is a privilege too sacred to be trifled with. The pernicious effects of trifling with prayer are certainly not less than the evils of any other form of profanity. Hence God must abhor all public desecration of this solemn exercise.

Now, brethren, in closing my remarks on this one great condition of prevailing prayer, let me beseech you never to suppose that you pray acceptably unless your heart sympathises deeply with the sentiments expressed in the Lord's Prayer. Your state of mind must be such that these words will most aptly express it. Your heart must run into the very words, and into all the sentiments of this form of prayer. Our Saviour meant here to teach us *how* to pray; and here you may come and learn how. Here you may see a map of the things to pray for, and a picture of the spirit in which acceptable prayer is offered.

XXII. AN APPROVING HEART -- CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER.

"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." -- 1 John 3:21, 22.

IN discussing this subject, I shall,

I. SHOW THAT IF OUR HEART DOES NOT CONDEMN US, WE HAVE AND CANNOT BUT HAVE CONFIDENCE TOWARD GOD THAT HE ACCEPTS US;

II. THAT IF WE HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT OUR HEART DOES NOT CONDEMN US, WE SHALL ALSO HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT GOD WILL GRANT US WHAT WE ASK;

III. SHOW WHY THIS IS SO, AND WHY WE KNOW IT TO BE SO.

I. *If our heart does not condemn us, we can have confidence we are acceptable to God*.

If our heart really does not condemn us, it is because we are *conscious of being conformed to all the light we have, and of doing the whole will of God as far as we know it*. While in this state it is impossible that, with right views of God's character, we should conceive of him as condemning us. Our intelligence instantly rejects the supposition that he does or can condemn us, that is, for our *present state*. We may be most deeply conscious that we have done wrong heretofore, and we may feel ourselves to be most guilty for this, and may be sure that God disapproves those past sins of ours, and would condemn us for them even now, if the pardoning blood of Christ had not intervened; but where pardon for past sins has been sought and found through redeeming blood, "there is therefore no more condemnation" for the past. And in reference to the present, the obvious truth is that if our conscience fully approves of our state, and we are conscious of having acted according to the best light we have, it contradicts all our just ideas of God to suppose that he condemns us. He is a father, and he cannot but smile on his obedient and trusting children.

Indeed, ourselves being in this state of mind, it is impossible for us *not* to suppose that God is well pleased with our present state. We cannot conceive of

him as being otherwise than pleased; for, if he were displeased with a state of sincere and full obedience, he would act contrary to his own character; he would cease to be benevolent, holy, and just. We cannot, therefore, conceive of him as refusing to accept us when we are conscious of obeying his will so far as we know it. Suppose the case of a soul appearing before God, fully conscious of seeking with all the heart to please God. In this case the soul must see that this is such a state as must please God.

Let us turn this subject over till we get it fully before our minds. For what is it that our conscience rightly condemns us? Plainly for not obeying God according to the best light we have. Suppose now we turn about and fully obey the dictates of conscience. Then its voice approves and ceases to condemn. Now all just views of the Deity require us to consider the voice of conscience in both cases as only the echo of his own. The God who condemns all disobedience must of necessity approve of obedience; and to conceive of him as disapproving our present state would be, in the conviction of our own minds, to condemn him.

It is therefore by no means presumption in us to assume that God accepts those who are conscious of really seeking supremely to please and obey him.

Again, let it be noted that in this state with an approving conscience, we should have no self-righteousness. A man in this state would at this very moment ascribe all his obedience to the grace of God. From his inmost soul he would say, "By the grace of God, I am what I am"; and nothing could be farther from his heart than, to take praise or glory to himself for anything good. Yet I have sometimes been exceedingly astonished to hear men, and even ministers of the gospel, speak with surprise and incredulity of such a state as our text presupposes -- a state in which a man's conscience universally approves of his moral state. But why be incredulous about such a state? Or why deem it a self-righteous and sinful state? A man in this state is as far as can be from ascribing glory to himself. No state can be farther from self-righteousness. So far is this from being a self-righteous state, that the fact is, every other state but this is self-righteous, and this alone is exempt from that sin. Mark how the man in this state ascribes all to the grace of God. The apostle Paul when in this state of conscious uprightness most heartily ascribes all to grace. "I laboured," says he, "more abundantly than they all, *yet not I, but the grace of God that is in me*."

But, observe that, while the apostle was in that state, it was impossible that he should conceive of God as displeased with his state. Paul might greatly and

justly condemn himself for his past life, and might feel assured that God disapproved and had condemned Saul, the proud persecutor, though he had since pardoned Saul, the praying penitent. But the moral state of Paul the believer, of Paul, the untiring labourer for Christ, of Paul, whose whole heart and life divine grace has now moulded into his own image, this moral state Paul's conscience approves, and his views of God compel him to believe that God approves.

So of the apostle John. Hear what he says "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, *because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight*." But here rises up a man to rebuke the apostle. What! he says, did you not know that your heart is corrupt, that you never can know all its latent wickedness, that you ought never to be so presumptuous as to suppose that you "do those things that please God?" Did you not know that no mere man does ever, even by any grace received in this life, really "keep the commandments of God so as to do those things that are pleasing in his sight?" No, says John, I did not know that. "What," rejoins his reprover, "not know that sin is mixed with all you do and that the least sin is displeasing to God?" Indeed, replies John, I knew I was sincerely trying to please God, and verily supposed I did please him and did keep his commandments, and that it was entirely proper to say so, all to the praise of upholding, sanctifying grace.

Again, when a man prays disinterestedly, and with a heart in full and deep sympathy with God, he may and should have confidence that God hears him. When he can say in all honesty before the Lord, Now, Lord, thou knowest that through the grace of thy Spirit my soul is set on doing good to men for thy glory; I am grieved for the dishonour done to thee, so that "rivers of water run down my eyes, because men keep not thy law," then he cannot but know that his prayers are acceptable to God.

Indeed no one, having right views of God's character, can come to him in prayer in a disinterested state of mind, and feel otherwise than that God accepts such a state of mind. Now since our heart cannot condemn us when we are in a disinterested state of mind, but must condemn any other state, it follows that if our heart does not condemn us, we shall have, and cannot but have, confidence that God hears our prayers and accepts our state as pleasing in his sight.

Again, when we are conscious of sympathising with God himself, we may know that God will answer our prayers. There never was a prayer made in this state of sympathy with God, which he failed to answer. God cannot fail to answer such a

prayer without denying himself. The soul, being in sympathy with God, feels as God feels; so that for God to deny its prayers, is to deny his own feelings, and refuse to do the very thing he himself desires. Since God cannot do this, he cannot fail of hearing the prayer that is in sympathy with his own heart.

In the state we are now considering, the Christian is conscious of praying in the Spirit, and therefore must know that his prayer is accepted before God. I say, he is conscious of this fact. Do not some of you know this? Ye who thus live and walk with God, do you not know that the Spirit of God helps your infirmities, and makes intercession for you according to the will of God? Are you not very conscious of these intercessions made for you, and in your very soul, as it were, with groanings that cannot be uttered? Your heart within pants and cries out after God, and is lifted up continually before him as spontaneously as it is when your heart sings, pouring out its deep outgushings of praise. You know how sometimes your heart sings, though your lips move not and you utter no sound; yet your heart is full of music, making melody to the Lord. Even so, your soul is sometimes in the mood of spontaneous prayer, and pours out its deep-felt supplications into the ears of the Lord of Hosts just as naturally as you breathe. The silent and ceaseless echoing of your heart is, Thy kingdom come -- thy kingdom come; and although you may not utter these words, and perhaps not any words at all, yet these words are a fair expression of the overflowing desires of your heart.

And this deep praying of the heart goes on while the Christian is still pursuing the common vocations of life. The man, perhaps, is behind the counter or in his workshop driving his plane, but his heart is communing or interceding with God. You may see him behind his plow -- but his heart is deeply engrossed with his Maker; he follows on, and only now and then starts up from the intense working of his mind and finds that his land is almost finished. The student has his book open to his lesson; but his deep musings upon God, or the irrepressible longings of his soul in prayer, consume his mental energies, and his eye floats unconsciously over the unnoticed page. God fills his thoughts. He is more conscious of this deep communion with God than he is of the external world. The team he is driving or the book he professes to study is by no means so really and so vividly a matter of conscious recognition to him as is his communion of soul with his God.

In this state, the soul is fully conscious of being perfectly submissive to God.

Whether he uses these words or not, his heart would always say, "Not my will, O Lord, but thine be done." Hence he knows that God will grant the blessing he asks, if he can do so without a greater evil to his kingdom than the resulting good of bestowing it. We cannot but know that the Lord delights to answer the prayers of a submissive child of his own.

Again, when the conscience sweetly and humbly approves, it seems impossible that we should feel so ashamed and confounded before God as to think that he cannot hear our prayer. The fact is, it is only those whose heart condemns them, who come before God ashamed and confounded, and who cannot expect God to answer their prayers. These persons cannot expect to feel otherwise than confounded, until the sting of conscious guilt is taken away by repentance and faith in a Redeemer's blood.

Yet again, the soul in this state is not afraid to come with humble boldness to the throne, as God invites him to do; for he recognises God as a real and most gracious father, and sees in Jesus a most compassionate, and condescending high priest. Of course he can look upon God only as being always ready to receive and welcome himself to his presence.

Nor is this a self-righteous state of mind. Oh, how often have I been amazed and agonised to hear it so represented! But how strange is this! Because you are conscious of being entirely honest before God, therefore it is maintained that you are self-righteous! You ascribe every good thing in yourself most heartily to divine grace, but yet you are (so some say) very self-righteous notwithstanding! How long will it take some people to learn what real self-righteousness is? Surely it does not consist in being full of the love and Spirit of God; nor does humility consist in being actually so full of sin and self-condemnation that you cannot feel otherwise than ashamed and confounded before both God and man.

II. *If our heart does not condemn us, we may have confidence that we shall receive the things we ask.*

1. This must be so, because it is his Spirit working in us that excites these prayers. God himself prepares the heart to pray; the Spirit of Christ leads this Christian to the throne of grace, and keeps him there; then presents the objects of prayer, enkindles desire, draws the soul into deep sympathy with God; and now, all this being wrought by the grace and Spirit of God, will he not answer these prayers? Indeed he will. How can he ever fail to answer them?

2. It is a remarkable fact that all real prayer seems to be summed up in the Lord's Prayer, and especially in those two most comprehensive petitions: "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The mind in a praying frame runs right into these two petitions, and seems to centre here continually. Many other and various things may be specified; but they are all only parts and branches of this one great blessing: Let God's kingdom come, and bear sway on earth as it does in heaven. This is the sum of all true prayer.

Now let it be observed that God desires this result infinitely more than we do. When, therefore, we desire it too, we are in harmony with the heart of God and he cannot deny us. The blessing we crave is the very thing which, of all others, he most delights to bestow.

3. Yet let it be noted here that God may not answer every prayer according to its letter; but he surely will according to its spirit. The real spirit is evermore this, "Thy kingdom come -- thy will be done"; and this God will assuredly answer, because he has so abundantly promised to do this very thing in answer to prayer.

III. *Why will God certainly answer such a prayer, and how can we know that he will?*

1. The text affirms that "whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." Now we might perhaps understand this to assign our obedience as the *reason* of God's giving the blessing sought in prayer. But if we should, we should greatly err. The fundamental reason always of God's bestowing blessings is his goodness -- his love. Let this be never forgotten. All good flows down from the great fountain of infinite goodness. Our obedience is only the *condition* of God's bestowing it -- never the fundamental reason or ground of its bestowment. It is very common for us, in rather loose and popular language, to speak of a condition as being a *cause* or fundamental reason. But on a point like the present, we ought to use language with more precision. The true meaning on this point undoubtedly is that obedience is the condition. This being fulfilled on our part, the Lord can let his infinite benevolence flow out upon us without restraint. Obedience takes away the obstacle; then the mighty gushings of divine love break forth. Obedience removes the obstacles; never merits or draws down the blessing.

2. If God were to give blessings upon any other condition, it would deceive multitudes, either respecting ourselves or himself. If he were to answer our

prayers, we being in a wrong state of mind, it would deceive others very probably; for if they did not know us well, they would presume that we were in a right state, and might be led to consider those things in us right which are in fact wrong.

Or, if they knew that we were wrong, and yet knew that God answered our prayers, what must they think of God? They could not avoid the conclusion that he patronises wrong-doing, and lifts up the smiles of his love upon iniquity; and how grievous must be the influence of such conclusions!

It should be borne in mind that God has a character to maintain. His reputation is a good to himself, and he must maintain it as an indispensable means of sustaining his moral government over other creatures. It could not be benevolent for him to take a course which would peril his own reputation as a holy God and as a patron and friend of holiness and not of sin.

3. God is well pleased when we remove the obstacles out of the way of his benevolence. He is infinitely good, and lives to do good, and for no other purpose -- for no other end whatever -- except to pour forth blessings upon his creatures wherever he can without peril to the well-being of other creatures under his care and love. He exists for ever in a state of entire consecration to this end. Such benevolence as this is infinitely right in God, and nothing less than this could be right for him.

Now, if it is his delight and his life to do good, how greatly must he rejoice when we remove all obstacles out of the way! How does his heart exult when another, and yet another, opportunity is afforded him of pouring out blessings in large and rich measure! Think of it, sinner, for it applies to you! Marvellous as you may think it, and most strange as it may seem, judged of by human rules and human examples, yet of God it cannot fail of being always true that he delights supremely in doing you good, and only waits till you remove the obstacles; then would his vast love break forth, and pour its ocean tides of mercy and of grace all around about you. Go and bow before your injured Sovereign in deep submission and real penitence, with faith also in Jesus for pardon, and thus put this matter to a trial! See if you do not find that his mercies are high above the heavens! See if anything is too great for his love to do for you!

And let each Christian make a similar proof of this amazing love. Place yourself where mercy can reach you without violating the glorious principles of Jehovah's

moral government; and then wait and see if you do not experience the most overwhelming demonstrations of his love! How greatly does your Father above delight to pour out his mighty tides of blessings! Oh, he is never so well pleased as when he finds the channel open and free for these great currents of blessings to flow forth upon his dear people!

A day or two since, I received a letter from the man in whose behalf you will recollect that I requested your prayers at a late church prayer-meeting. This letter was full of precious interest. The writer has long been a stranger to the blessedness of the gospel; but now he writes me: "I am sure you are praying for me, for within a week I have experienced a peace of mind that is new to me."

I mention this now as another proof of the wonderful readiness of our Father in heaven to hear and answer prayer. Oh, what love is this! To what shall I compare it? and how shall I give you any adequate view of its amazing fullness and strength? Think of a vast body of water, pent up and suspended high above our heads, pressing and pressing at every crevice to find an outlet where it may gush forth. Suppose the bottom of the vast Pacific should heave and pour its ocean tides over all the continents of the earth. This might illustrate the vast overflowings of the love of God; how grace and love are mounting up far and infinitely above all the mountains of your sins. Yes; let the deep, broad Pacific Ocean be elevated on high and there pent up, and then conceive of its pressure. How it would force its way and pour out its gushing floods wherever the least channel might be opened! And you would not need to fear that your little wants would drain it dry! Oh, no! you would understand how there might be enough and to spare; how it might be said, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it"; how the promises might read, "Bring ye all the tithes into my store-house, and prove me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out blessings till there be not room enough to receive them." The great oceans of divine love are never drained dry. Let Christians but bring in their tithes and make ready their vessels to receive, and then, having fulfilled the conditions, they may "stand still and see the salvation of God." Oh, how those mountain floods of mercy run over and pour themselves all abroad till every capacity of the soul is filled! Oh, how your little vessels will run over and run over, as in the case of the prophet when the widow's vessels were all full, and he cried out, Oh, hasten, hasten! "Is there not another vessel?" Still the oil flows on -- is there not another vessel? No more, she says; all are full; then and only then was the flowing oil stayed. How often have I thought of this in seasons of great revival,

when Christians really get into a praying frame, and God seems to give them everything they ask for; until at length the prophet cries out, Is there not yet another vessel? Oh, bring more vessels, more vessels yet, for still the oil is flowing and still runs over; but ah, the church has reached the limit of her expectation. She has provided no more vessels: and the heavenly current is stayed. Infinite love can bless no more; for faith is lacking to prepare for and receive it.

REMARKS.

1. Many persons, being told that God answers prayer *for Christ's* sake, overlook the condition of obedience. They have so loose an idea of prayer, and of our relations to God in it, and of his relations to us and to his moral government, that they think they may be disobedient and yet prevail through Christ. How little do they understand the whole subject! Surely they must have quite neglected to study their Bible to learn the truth about prayer. They might very easily have found it there declared, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." All this surely teaches us that if there be the least sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer. Nothing short of entire obedience for the time being is the condition of acceptance with God. There must be a sincere and honest heart -- else how can you look up with humble confidence and say, My Father; else how can you use the name of Jesus, as your prevailing Mediator; and else, how can God smile upon you before all the eyes of angels and of pure saints above!

When men come before God with their idols set up in their hearts, and the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face, the Lord says, "Should I be inquired of at all by them?" Read and see (Ezekiel 14:3-5). The Lord commissions his prophet to declare unto all such, "I, the Lord, will answer him that cometh thus, *according to the multitude of his idols*." Such prayers God will answer by sending not a divine fullness, but a wasting leanness; not grace and mercy and peace, but barrenness and cursings and death.

Do not some of you know what this is? You have found in your own experience that the more you pray, the harder your heart is. And what do you suppose the reason of this can be? Plainly there can be no other reason for it than this: You come up with the stumbling-block of your iniquity before your face, and God answers you according, not to his great mercies, but to the multitude of your

idols.

Should you not take heed how you pray?

2. Persons never need hesitate, because of *their past sins*, to approach God with the fullest confidence. If they now repent, and are conscious of fully and honestly returning to God with all their heart, they have no reason to fear being repulsed from the footstool of mercy.

I have sometimes heard persons express great astonishment when God heard and answered their prayers, after they had been very great and vile sinners. But such astonishment indicates but little knowledge of the matchless grace and loving kindness of our God. Look at Saul of Tarsus. Once a bitter and mad persecutor, proud in his vain Pharisaism; but now repenting, returning, and forgiven; mark what power he has with God in prayer. In fact, after penitence, God pardons so fully that, as his word declares, he remembers their iniquities no more. Then the Lord places the pardoned soul on a footing where he can prevail with God as truly and as well as any angel in heaven can! So far as the Bible gives us light on this subject, we must conclude that all this is true. And why? Not because the pardoned Christian is more righteous than an angel; but because he is equally accepted with the purest angel, and has, besides, the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, all made available to him when he uses this all-prevalent name. Oh, there is a world of meaning in this so-little-thought-of arrangement for prayer *in Jesus' name!* The value of Christ's merits is all at your disposal. If Jesus Christ could obtain any blessing at the court of heaven, you may obtain the same by asking in his name -- it being supposed of course that you fulfil the conditions of acceptable prayer. If you come and pray in the spirit of Christ, his Spirit making intercession with your spirit, and your faith taking hold of his all-meritorious name, you may have his intercessions before the throne in your behalf, and whatever Christ can obtain there, he will obtain for you. Ask, therefore, now, so Christ himself invites and promises, "ask and receive, that your joy may be full."

Oh, what a vantage-ground is this upon which God has placed Christians! Oh, what a foundation on which to stand and plead with most prevailing power! How wonderful! First, God bestows pardon, takes away the sting of death; restores peace of conscience and joy in believing: then gives the benefit of Christ's intercession; and then invites Christians to ask what they will! Oh, how mighty, how prevalent, might every Christian become in prayer! Doubtless we may say that a church living with God, and fully meeting the conditions of acceptable

prayer, might have more power with God than so many angels. And shall we hear professed Christians talk of having no power with God! Alas, alas! such surely know not their blessed birthright. They have not yet begun to know the gospel of the Son of God!

3. Many continue the forms of prayer when they are living in sin, and do not try to reform, and even have no sincere desire to reform. All such persons should know that they grievously provoke the Lord to answer their prayers with fearful judgments.

4. It is only those that live and walk with God whose prayers are of any avail to themselves, to the church, or to the world. Only those whose conscience does not condemn them, and who live in a state of conscious acceptance with God. They can pray. According to our text, they receive whatever they ask, because they keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.

5. When those who have been the greatest sinners will turn to God, they may prevail as really as if they had never sinned at all. When God forgives through the blood of Jesus, it is real forgiveness, and the pardoned penitent is welcomed as a child to the bosom of infinite love. For Jesus' sake God receives him without the least danger of its being inferred that himself cares not for sin. Oh, he told the universe once for all, how utterly he hated sin. He made this point known when he caused his well-beloved Son to bear our sins in his own body on the tree, and it pleased the Father to bruise him and hide his face from even the Son of his love. Oh, what a beautiful, glorious thing this gospel system is! In it God has made such manifestations of his regard for his law, that now he has nothing to fear in showing favour to any and every sinner who believes in Christ. If this believing sinner will also put away his sin; if he will only say, In the name of the Lord I put them all away -- all -- now -- for ever; let him do this with all his heart, and God will not fear to embrace him as a son; this penitent need fear nothing so long as he hides himself in the open cleft of this blessed Rock of Ages.

Look at the case of the prodigal son. Famished, ragged, poor, ready to perish, he remembers his father's house and the plenty that abounds there; he comes to himself, and hence looks upon things once more according to their reality. Now he says: "In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare, but here I am perishing with hunger." But why is he ready to perish with hunger? Ah, he ran away from a bountiful and kind father, and spent all his substance in riotous

living. But he comes to himself. There, see him drawing near his father's mansion -- once his own dear home; see, the father rushes to embrace him; he hastens to make this penitent son most welcome to his home and to his heart. So God makes haste to show that he is not afraid to make the vilest sinner welcome if he only comes back a penitent and rests on the name of Jesus. Oh, what a welcome is this!

Follow on that beautiful illustration of it which the Saviour has given us. Bring forth the best robe. Invite together all our friends and neighbours. Prepare the music. Spread the table and kill the fatted calf. It is fit that we should make merry and be glad. Lead forward this long-lost son and put on him my best robe. Let there be joy throughout my house over my returned and penitent son.

And what does all this show? One thing, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, and joy in the very heart of God himself, over one sinner that repenteth. Oh, I wonder, sinners will not come home to their Father in heaven!

6. Sinner, if you will come back to the Lord, you may not only prevail for yourself, but for your associates and friends. I was once in a revival where a large company of young men banded themselves together under a mutual pledge that they would not be converted. Father Nash was with me in that revival season, and on one occasion, while the young men alluded too were all present, he made a declaration which startled me, and almost shocked himself. Yet, as he said afterward, he dared not take it back, for he did not know how he came to say it, and perhaps the hand of God might be in it. "Young men," said he, "God will break your ranks within one week, or he will send some of you to hell."

It was an awful time. We feared that possibly it might not prove to be so, and that then the result would be exceeding bad upon the minds of that already hardened band. But it was spoken, and we could only cry unto God.

Time rolled along. About two or three days after this declaration was made, the leader of this band called to see me, all broken down and as mellow as he could be. As soon as he saw me, he cried out, "What shall I do?" "What are you thinking about?" said I. "About my wicked companions," said he, "all of them in the way to hell." "Do you pray for them?" I asked. "Oh, yes," said he, "I cannot help praying for them every moment." "Well, then," said I, "there is one thing more; go to them and entreat them in Christ's name to be reconciled to God." He darted out of my room and began this work in earnest. Suffice it to say, that

before the week was closed almost all of that band of young men were converted.

And now let me say to the impenitent sinners in this assembly, If others do not labour to promote a revival, begin at once and do it yourself. Learn from such a case as I have just stated what you can do. Don't you think you could do something of the greatest value to souls if you would seriously try? Who is there here -- let me see -- what young man or young woman is there here now impenitent, do not you believe that if you would repent yourself, you might then go and pray and labour and secure the conversion of others, perhaps many others, of your companions?

Sinners are usually disposed to throw all the responsibility of this labour and prayer upon Christians. I throw it back upon you. Do right yourselves, and then you can pray. Do right, and then none can labour with more effect than yourselves in this great work of bringing back wandering prodigals to their father's house.

Christian hearer, is it not a dreadful thing for you to be in a state in which you cannot prevail with God? Let us look around; how is it with you? Can *you* prevail with God; *and you -- and you?* Who are they, and how many are there, in such a state that their prayers avail nothing, and who know before they pray, and while they are praying, that they are in no fit state to offer prevailing prayer? One of the brethren, you recollect, said to us at a recent church meeting, "I have lost my power to prevail with God. I know I am not ready for this work." How many others are there, still in the same awful condition?

Oh! how many have we here who are the salt of the earth, whose prayers and redeeming influence save the community from becoming perfectly putrid with moral corruption? I hope they will be found alive and at work in this trying hour. Oh! we must have your prayers for the impenitent -- for the anxious -- for backsliders; or if you cannot pray -- at least come together and confess your sins; tell your brethren and sisters you cannot pray, and beg of them to pray for you that you may be brought back to the light and the peace -- and the penitence of real salvation.

XXIII. ON PRAYING ALWAYS.

"He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." -- Luke 18:1.

IN discussing the subject of *prayer*, presented in our text, I propose to inquire,

I. WHY MEN SHOULD PRAY AT ALL;

II. WHY MEN SHOULD PRAY ALWAYS AND NOT FAINT;

III. WHY THEY DO NOT PRAY ALWAYS.

I. *Why men should pray at all*.

Our dependence on God is universal, extending to all things. This fact is known and acknowledged. None but atheists presume to call it in question.

Prayer is the dictate of our nature. By the voice of nature this duty is revealed as plainly as possible. We feel the pressure of our wants, and our instincts cry out to a higher power for relief in their supply. You may see this in the case of the most wicked man, as well as in the case of good men. The wicked, when in distress, cry out to God for help. Indeed mankind have given evidence of this in all ages and in every nation; showing both the universal necessity of prayer, and that it is a dictate of our nature to look up to a God above.

It is a primitive conviction of our minds that God does hear and answer prayer. If men did not assume this to be the case, why should they pray? The fact that men do spontaneously pray, shows that they really expect God to hear prayer. It is contrary to all our original belief to assume that events occur under some law of concatenation, too rigid for the Almighty to break, and which he never attempts to adjust according to his will. Men do not naturally believe any such thing as this.

The objection to prayer, that God is unchangeable, and therefore cannot turn aside to hear prayer, is altogether a fallacy and the result of ignorance. Consider what is the true idea of God's unchangeableness. Surely, it is not that his course of conduct never changes to meet circumstances; but it is this -- that his *character* never changes; that his nature and the principles which control his voluntary action remain eternally the same. All his natural, all his moral

attributes remain for ever unchanged. This is all that can rationally be implied in God's immutability.

Now, his hearing and answering prayer imply no change of character -- no change in his principles of action. Indeed, if you ask why he ever answers prayer at all, the answer must be, because he is unchangeable. Prayer brings the suppliant into new relations to God's kingdom; and to meet these new relations, God's unchangeable principles require him to change the course of his administration. He answers prayer because he is unchangeably benevolent. It is not because his benevolence changes, but because it does *not* change, that he answers prayer. Who can suppose that God's answering prayer implies any change in his moral character? For example, if a man, in prayer, repents, God forgives; if he does not repent of present sin, God does not forgive; and who does not see that God's immutability must require this course at his hands? Suppose God did not change his conduct when men change their character and their attitude towards him. This would imply fickleness -- an utter absence of fixed principles. His unchangeable goodness must therefore imply that, when his creatures change morally, he changes his course, and conforms to their new position. Any other view of the case is simply absurd, and only the result of ignorance. Strange that men should hold it to be inconsistent for God to change, and give rain in answer to prayer, or give any needed spiritual blessings to those who ask them!

Intercourse with God is a necessity of moral beings, demanded by creatures as a necessity of their natures. No doubt this is true in heaven itself, and the fact that this want of their natures is so gloriously supplied there, makes heaven. The Bible represents spirits in heaven as praying. We hear them crying out, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. 6:10). True, their subjects of prayer are not in all respects the same as ours: we have things to pray for which they have no occasion to ask for themselves. They are neither sick nor sinful; but can you suppose they never pray, "Thy kingdom come?" Have they lost all sympathy with those interests of Zion? Far from it. Knowing more of the value of those interests, they no doubt feel more deeply their importance, and pray more earnestly for their promotion. From the nature of the case, God's treatment of the inhabitants of heaven must be conditioned on their voluntary course in regard to him and his kingdom. It must be governed and determined by their knowledge, their progress in knowledge, and their improvement of the means and powers at

their command. Obviously their voluntary worship, gratitude, thanksgiving, and service of every sort, must vary their relations to God, and consequently his course towards them. He will do many things to them and for them which he could not do if they did not pray, and praise, and love, and study, and labour. This must be true, even in heaven, of apostles and prophets, and of all glorified saints. God makes to them successive revelations of himself, each successively higher than the preceding, and all dependent on their voluntary devotion to him and to his glory. They are for ever advancing in his service, full of worship, praise, adoration, and this only prepares them the more to be sent on missions of love and service, and to be employed as the interests of God's kingdom require. Hence we see that God's conduct towards saints in heaven depends on their own voluntary course and bearing towards him. This is a necessity of any and every moral system. If saints in heaven are moral agents, and God's government over them is also moral, all these results must follow. In this world sin exists; and in this fact we see an obvious necessity for this law of moral administration. But the holy in heaven are no less moral and responsible than the sinning on earth. The great object of God's administration is to assimilate moral beings to himself; hence he must make his treatment of them depend on their moral course towards him.

In regard to saints on earth, how can God do them any good unless he can draw them to himself in prayer and praise? This is one of the most evident necessities that can be named. Men irresistibly feel the propriety of confession and supplication, in order to achieve forgiveness. This feeling lies among the primitive affirmations of the mind. Men know that, if they would be healed of sin, they must seek and find God.

II. *Why men should pray always and not faint.*

But why pray so much and so often? Why the exhortation to pray always and not to faint?

The case presented in the context is very strong. Whether it be history or supposition does not affect the merits of the case as given us to illustrate importunity in prayer. The poor widow persevered. She kept coming and would not be discouraged. By dint of perseverance simply, she succeeded. The judge who cared not for God or man did care somewhat for his own comfort and quiet, and therefore thought it wise to listen to her story and grant her request. Upon this case our Lord seized, to enforce and encourage importunity in prayer. Hear

his argument. "Shall not God," who is by no means unjust, but whose compassions are a great deep, "shall not such a God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him, though he seem to bear long" in delaying to answer their prayers? "I tell you he will avenge them speedily."

1. Men ought to pray always, because they always need the influence of prayer. Consider what is implied in prayer and what prayer does for you. Prayer bathes the soul in an atmosphere of the divine presence. Prayer communes with God and brings the whole mind under the hallowed influence of such communion. Prayer goes to God to seek pardon and find mercy and grace to help. How obvious, then, that we always need its influence on our hearts and lives! Truly, we need not wonder that God should enjoin it upon us to pray always.

2. God needs prayer from us as a condition of his doing to us and for us all he would. He loves us and sees a thousand blessings that we need, and that he would delight to bestow; but yet he cannot bestow them except on condition that we ask for them in Jesus' name. His treatment of us and his bestowment of blessings upon us must depend upon our views and conduct, whether we feel our dependence on him, whether we confess and forsake all sin, whether we trust him and thoroughly honour him in all things. His action towards us must depend upon our attitude towards him. It is essential in the management of a moral system that we should pray and trust, in order that he may freely and abundantly give, and especially that he may give in a way safe to us and honourable to himself. Nothing can be substituted for our own praying, either in its relations to God or to ourselves. We cannot get along without the personal benefit of prayer, confession, trust, and praise. You cannot substitute instruction, ever so much or so good; for these things must enter into the soul's *experience*; you must feel them before God, and carry out the life and power of these truths in your very heart before the Lord; else they are worse than unknown to you. You are not likely to understand many of these things without prayer; and even if you were to understand them, and yet not pray, the knowledge would only be a curse to you.

What can be so useful to us, sinners, as direct communion with God -- the searching of the heart which it induces -- the humility, the confessions, the supplications? Other things have their use. Instruction is good; reading God's word may be a blessing; communion with the saints is pleasant; but what are they all, compared with personal intercourse with God? Nothing else can make

the soul so sick of sin, and so dead to the world. Nothing else breathes such spiritual life into the soul as real prayer.

Prayer also prepares us the better to receive all blessings from God, and hence should be constant.

Prayer pleases God as governor of the universe, because it puts us in a position in which he can bless us and gratify his own benevolence.

Search the history of the world, and you will find that where there has been most true prayer, and the soul has been most deeply imbued with the divine presence, there God has most abundantly and richly blessed the soul. Who does not know that holy men of old were eminent for usefulness and power according as they were faithful and mighty in prayer?

The more we pray, the more shall we be enlightened, for surely they are most enlightened who pray most. If we go no farther in divine things than human reason can carry us, we get little indeed from God.

The more men pray, the more they will love prayer, and the more will they enjoy God. On the other hand, the more we pray, in real prayer, the more will God delight in us. Observe this which I say, *Delight*; the more will God truly DELIGHT in us. This is not merely the love of benevolence, for God is benevolent to all; but he delights in his praying children in the sense of having complacency in their character. The Bible often speaks of the great interest which God takes in those who live near him in much prayer. This is naturally and necessarily the case. Why should not God delight in those who delight in him?

The more we pray, the more God loves to manifest to others that he delights in us, and hears our prayers. If his children live lives of much prayer, God delights to honour them, as an encouragement to others to pray. They come into a position in which he can bless them and can make his blessings on them result in good to others -- thus doubly gratifying the benevolence of his heart.

We can never reach a position in which we shall not need prayer. Who believes that saints in heaven will have no need of prayer? True, they will have perfect faith, but this, so far from precluding prayer, only the more ensures it. Men have strangely assumed, that if there were only perfect faith, prayer would cease.

Nothing can be more false and groundless. Certainly, then, we never can get beyond prayer.

If I had time I should like to show how the manner of prayer varies as Christians advance in holiness. They pray not less, but more, and they know better *how* to pray. When the natural life is mingled largely with the spiritual, there is an outward effervescing, which passes away as the soul comes nearer to God. You would suppose there is less excitement, and there *is* less of animal excitement; but the deep fountains of the soul flow in unbroken sympathy with God.

We can never get beyond the point where prayer is greatly useful to us. The more the heart breathes after God, and rises towards him in heavenly aspirations, the more useful do such exercises become. The aged Christian finds himself more and more benefitted in prayer as he draws more and more near to God. The more he prays, the more he sees the wisdom and necessity of prayer for his own spiritual good.

The very fact that prayer is so great a privilege to sinners makes it most honourable to God to hear prayer. Some think it disgraceful to God. What a sentiment! It assumes that God's real greatness consists in his being so high above us as to have no regard for us whatever. Not so with God. He who regards alike the flight of an archangel and the fall of a sparrow -- before whose eye no possible event is too minute for his attention -- no insect too small for his notice and his love, his infinite glory is manifest in this very fact, that nothing is too lofty or too low for his regard. None are too insignificant to miss sympathy -- none too mean to share his kindness.

Many talk of prayer as only a duty, not a privilege; but with this view of it they cannot pray acceptably. When your children, full of wants, come running to you in prayer, do they come because it is a duty? No, indeed! They come because it is their privilege. They regard it as their privilege. Other children do not feel so towards you. And it *is* a wonderful privilege! Who does not know it and feel it to be so? Shall we then ever fail to avail ourselves of it?

Finally, we are sure to prevail if we thoroughly persevere, and pray always, and do not faint. Let this suffice to induce perseverance in prayer. Do you need blessings? and yet are they delayed? Pray always and never faint; so shall you obtain all you need.

III. *Why do not men pray always?*

Many reasons exist.

1. In the case of some, because the enmity of their hearts towards God is such that they are shy, and dread prayer. They have so strong a dislike to God, they cannot make up their minds to come near to him in prayer.

2. Some are self-righteous and self-ignorant, and therefore have no heart to pray. Their self-righteousness makes them feel strong enough without prayer, and self-ignorance prevents their feeling their own real wants.

3. Unbelief keeps others from constant prayer. They have not confidence enough in God as ready to answer prayer. Of course, with such unbelief in their hearts, they will not pray always.

4. Sophistry prevents others. I have alluded to some of its forms. They say, God, being immutable, never changes his course; or they urge that there is no need of prayer, inasmuch as God will surely do just right, although nobody should pray. These are *little* sophistries, such as ignorant minds get up and stumble over. It is wonderful that any minds can be so ignorant and so unthinking as to be influenced by these sophistries. I can recollect how these objections to prayer came up many years since before my mind, but were instantly answered and set aside, they seemed so absurd. This, for instance, that God had framed the universe so wisely that there is no *need* of prayer, and indeed no *room* for it. My answer was ready. What was God's object in making and arranging his universe? Was it to show himself to be a good *mechanic, so* skilful that he can make a universe to run itself, without his constant agency? *Was this* his object? *No!* But his object was to plant in this universe intelligent minds, and then reveal himself to them, and draw them to love and trust their own infinite Father. This object is every way noble and worthy of a God. But the other notion is horrible! It takes from God every endearing attribute, and leaves him only a *good mechanic!*

The idea that God mingles his agency continually in human affairs prevails everywhere among all minds in all ages. Everywhere they have seen God revealing himself. They expect such revelations of God. They have believed in them, and have seen how essential this fact is to that confidence and love which belong to a moral government. It seems passing strange that men can sophisticate themselves into such nonsense as this! Insufferable nonsense are all

such objections!

On one occasion, when it had been very wet and came off suddenly very dry, the question arose, How can you vindicate the providence of God? At first the question stung me; I stopped, considered it a few moments, and then asked, What can his object be in giving us weather at all? Why does he send, or not send, rain? If the object be to raise as many potatoes as possible, this is not the wisest course. But if the object be to make us feel our dependence, this *is* the wisest course possible. What if God were to raise harvests enough in one year to supply us for the next ten? We might all become atheists. We should be very likely to think we could live without God. But now, every day and every year, he shuts us up to depend on himself. Who does not see that a moral government ordered on any other system would work ruin?

Another reason is, men have no real sense of sin or of any spiritual want; no consciousness of guilt. While in this state of mind, it need not be expected that men will pray.

In the other extreme, after becoming deeply convicted, they fall into despair and think it does no good to pray.

Another reason for not praying much is found in self-righteous conceptions of what is requisite to success in prayer. One says, I am too degraded, and am not good enough to pray. This objection is founded altogether in self-righteous notions -- assuming that your own goodness must be the ground or reason for God's hearing your prayer.

A reason with many for little prayer is their worldly-mindedness. Their minds are so filled with thoughts of a worldly nature, they cannot get into the spirit of prayer.

Again, in the case of some, their own experience discourages them. They have often prayed, yet with little success. This brings them into a sceptical attitude in regard to prayer. Very likely the real reason of their failure has been the lack of perseverance. They have not obeyed this precept which urges that men pray always, and never faint.

REMARKS.

1. It is no loss of time to pray. Many think it chiefly or wholly lost time. They are

so full of business, they say, and assume that prayer will spoil their business. I tell you, that your business, if it be of such sort as ought to be done at all, will go all the better for much prayer. Rise from your bed a little earlier, and pray. Get time somehow by almost any imaginable sacrifice, sooner than forego prayer. Are you studying? It is no loss of time to pray, as I know very well by my own experience. If I am to preach, with only two hours for preparation, I give one hour to prayer. If I were to study anything, let it be Virgil or Geometry, I would by all means pray first. Prayer enlarges and illumines the mind. It is like coming into the presence of a master spirit. You know how sometimes this electrifies the mind, and fires it with boundless enthusiasm. So, and much the more, does real access to God.

Let a physician pray a great deal; he needs counsel from God. Let the mechanic and the merchant pray much; they will testify, after trial of it, that God gives them counsel, and that, consequently, they lose nothing, and gain much, by constant prayer.

2. None but an eminently praying man is a safe religious teacher. However scientific and literary, if he be not a praying man, he cannot be trusted.

A spirit of prayer is of much greater value than human learning without it. If I were to choose, I would prefer intercourse with God in prayer before the intellect of Gabriel. I do not say this to disparage the value of learning and knowledge, for when great talents and learning are sanctified with much prayer, the result is a mind of mighty power.

Those who do not pray cannot understand the facts in regard to answers to prayer. How can they know? Those things seem to them utterly incredible. They have had no such experience. In fact, all their experience goes in the opposite direction. State a case to them; they look incredulous. Perhaps they will say, you seem to think you can prophesy and foreknow events! Let them be answered, that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." Those who keep up a living intercourse with God know many things they do not tell, and had better not tell. When I was a young convert, I knew an aged lady whose piety and prayer seemed to me quite extraordinary. You could not feel like talking much in her presence; there was something in it that struck you as remarkable. The subject of sanctification came into discussion, and meeting me, on one occasion, she said, "Charles, take care what you do! Don't do things to be sorry for afterwards." A son of hers became a Christian and was astonished at the

manifestations of his mother's piety. She had prayed for him long and most earnestly. When, at length, his eyes were opened, she began to say, "I did not tell anybody my experiences, but, in fact, I have known nothing about condemnation for thirty years past. In all this time I am not aware that I have committed a known sin. My soul has enjoyed uninterrupted communion with God, and constant access to his mercy-seat in prayer."

Prayer is the great secret of ministerial success. Some think this secret lies in talent or in tact; but it is not so. A man may know all human knowledge, yet, without prayer, what can he do? He cannot move and control men's hearts. He can do nothing to purpose unless he lives in sympathy and open-faced communion with God. Only so can he be mighty through God to win souls to Christ. Here let me not be understood to depreciate learning and the knowledge of God. By no means. But prayer and its power are much greater and more effective. Herein lies the great mistake of theological seminaries and of gospel ministers. They lay excessive stress on learning, and genius, and talents; they fail to appreciate duly the paramount importance of much prayer. How much better for them to lay the principal stress on bathing the soul in God's presence! Let them rely, first of all, on God, who worketh mightily in his praying servants through his Spirit given them; and, mediately, let them estimate above all other means, prayer -- prayer that is abundant, devout, earnest, and full of living faith. Such a course would be an effectual correction of one of the most prevalent and perilous mistakes of the age.

XXIV. ON PRAYER FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" -- Luke 11:11-13.

THESE verses form the concluding part of a very remarkable discourse of our Lord to his disciples on prayer. It was introduced by their request that he would teach them how to pray. In answer to this request, he gave them what we are wont to call the Lord's Prayer, followed by a forcible illustration of the value of importunity, which he still further applied and enforced by renewing the general promise, "Ask, and it shall be given you." Then to confirm their faith still more, he expands the idea that God is their Father, and should be approached in prayer as if he were an infinitely kind and loving parent. This constitutes the leading idea in the strong appeal made in our text. "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

1. Remarking upon this text, I first observe that, when we rightly understand the matter, we shall see that the gift of the Holy Ghost comprehends all we need spiritually. It secures to us that union with God which is eternal life. It implies conversion, which consists in the will's being submitted to God's control. Sanctification is (1) this union of the will to God perfected and perpetuated; (2) the ascendancy of this state of the will over the entire sensibilities, so that the whole mind is drawn into union and sympathy with the mind and heart of God.

2. It is supremely easy to obtain this gift from God. In other words, it is easy to obtain from God all spiritual blessings that we truly need. If this be not so, what shall we think of these words of Christ? How can we by any means explain them consistently with fair truthfulness? Surely, it is easy for children to get really good things from their father. Which of you, being a father, does not know it to be easy for your children to get good things from you? You know in your own experience that they obtain without difficulty even from you, all the real good they need, provided it be in your power to give it. But you are sometimes "evil,"

and Christ implies that, since God is never evil, but always infinitely good, it is much more easy for one to get the Holy Spirit than even for your children to get bread from your hands. "*Much more!*" What words of meaning in such a connection as this! Every father knows there is nothing in the way of his children getting from him all the good things they really need and which he has to give. Every such parent values these good things for the sake of giving them to his children. For this, parents toil and plan for their children's sake. Can they then be averse or even slow to give these things to their children?

Yet God is much more ready to give his Spirit. My language, therefore, is not at all too strong. If God is much more ready and willing to give his children good things than you are to give to yours, then surely it must be easy, and not difficult, to get spiritual blessings, even to the utmost extent of our wants.

Let this argument come home to the hearts of those of you who are parents. Surely, you must feel its force. Christ must be a false teacher if this be not so. It must be that this great gift, which in itself comprehends all spiritual gifts, is most easily obtained, and in any amount which our souls need.

3. How very injurious and dishonourable to God are the practical views of almost all men on this subject! The dependence of men on the Holy Spirit has come to be the standing apology for moral and spiritual delinquency. Men everywhere profess to want the Holy Spirit, and, more or less, to feel their need, and to be praying for this gift; but continually and everywhere they complain that they do not get it. These complaints assume, both directly and indirectly, that it is very difficult to get this gift; that God keeps his children on a very low diet, and on the smallest possible amount even of that; that he deals out their spiritual bread and water in most stinted amount -- as if he purposed to keep his children only an inch above starvation. Pass among the churches, and hear what they say and how they pray; and what would you think? How would you be shocked at the strange, may I not say, *blasphemous* assumptions which they make concerning God's policy in giving, or rather *not* giving, the Holy Spirit to those that ask him! I can speak from experience and personal observation. When I began to attend prayer-meetings, this fact to which I have alluded struck me as very strange. I had never attended a prayer-meeting till I had come to manhood, for my situation in this respect was very unlike yours here. But after I came to manhood, and prayer-meetings were held in the place where I lived, I used to attend them very steadily. It was a matter of great interest to me, more than I can

explain, or well express. I was filled with wonder to hear Christians pray, and the more so as I then began to read my Bible, and to find in it such things as we have in our text today. To read such promises, and then hear Christians talk was surprising. What they did say, coupled with what they seemed to mean, would run thus: I have a duty to perform at this meeting; I cannot go away without doing it. I want to testify that religion is a good thing, a very good thing, although I have not got much of it. I believe God is a hearer of prayer, and yet I don't think he hears mine -- certainly not to much purpose. I believe that prayer brings to us the Holy Spirit, and yet, though I have always been praying for this Spirit, I have scarcely ever received it.

Such seemed to be the strain of their talking and thinking, and I must say that it puzzled me greatly. I have reason to know that it has often puzzled others. Within a few years past, I have found this to be the standing objection of unconverted men. They say, "I cannot hold out if I should be converted -- it is so difficult to get and to keep the Holy Spirit." They appeal to professed Christians and say, Look it them: they are not engaged in religion; they are not doing their Master's work in good earnest, and they confess it; they have not the Spirit, and they confess it; they bear a living testimony that these promises are of very little practical value.

Now, these are plain matters of fact, and should be deeply pondered by all professed Christians. The Christian life of multitudes is nothing less than a flat denial of the great truths of the Bible.

Often, when I am urging Christians to be filled with the Holy Ghost, I am asked, Do you really think this gift is for me? Do you think all can have it who will? If you tell them of instances, here and there, of persons who walk in the light, and are filled with the Spirit, they reply, Are not those very special cases? Are they not the favoured few, enjoying a blessing that only a few can hope to enjoy?

Here you should carefully observe, that the question is not, whether few or many have this blessing; but, is it practically within reach of all? Is it indeed available to all? Is the gift actually tendered to all in the fullest and highest sense? Is it easy to possess it? These being the real questions, we must see that the teachings of the text cannot be mistaken on this subject.

Either Christ testified falsely of this matter, or this gift is available to all, and is easily obtained. For, of the meaning and scope of his language, there can be no

doubt. No language can be plainer. No illustrations could be more clear, and none could easily be found that are stronger.

4. How shall we account for this impression, so extensively pervading the church, that the Holy Spirit can rarely be obtained in ample, satisfying fullness, and then only with the greatest difficulty?

This impression obviously grows out of the current experience of the church. In fact, but few seem to have this conscious communion with God through the Spirit; but few seem really to walk with God and be filled with his Spirit.

When I *say few,* I must explain myself to mean few relatively to the whole number of professed Christians. Taken absolutely, the number is great and always has been. Sometimes, some have thought the number to be small, but they were mistaken. Elijah thought himself alone, but God gave him to understand that there were many -- a host, spoken of as seven thousand who had never bowed the knee to Baal. Ordinarily, such a use of the sacred number seven, is to be taken for a large, indefinite sum, much larger than if taken definitely. It may be so here. Even *then,* in that exceedingly dark age, there were yet many who stood unflinchingly for God!

It is a curious fact that persons who have really the most piety are often supposed to have the least, so few there are who judge of piety as God does. Those who preach the real gospel are often refreshed to find some in almost every congregation who manifestly embrace it. You can judge by their very looks, their eyes shine and their faces are all aglow -- almost like the face of Moses, descended from the mount.

But theirs is not the common experience of professed Christians. The common one, which has served to create the general impression as to the difficulty of obtaining the Holy Spirit, is indeed utterly unlike this. The great body of nominal Christians have not the Spirit, within the meaning of Romans 8. They cannot say, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." It is not true of them that they "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Comparatively few of all know in their own conscious experience that they live and abide in the Spirit.

Here is another fact. Many are praying -- apparently for the Spirit of God, but do not get it. If you go to a prayer-meeting, you hear everybody pray for this gift. It

is so, also, in the family, and probably in the closet also. Yet, strange to tell, they do not get it. This experience of much prayer for this blessing, and much failure to get it, is everywhere common. Churches have their prayer-meetings, years and years in succession, praying for the Spirit, but they do not get it. In view of this fact, we must conclude, either that the promise is not reliable, or that the prayer does not meet the conditions of the promise. I shall take up this alternative by-and-by; just now, my business is to account for the prevalent impression that the Spirit of God is hard to get and keep, even in answer to prayer, a fact which obviously is accounted for by the current experience of nominal Christians.

It should also be said that the churches have been taught that God is a sovereign, in such a sense that his gift of the spirit is only occasional, and it is then given without any connection with apparent causes -- not dependent, by any means, on the fulfilment of conditions on our part. The common idea of sovereignty excludes the idea that God holds this blessing free to all, on condition of real prayer for it. I say *real* prayer, for I must show you by-and-by that much of the apparent praying of the church for the Spirit is not real prayer. It is this spurious, selfish praying that leads to so much misconception as to the bestowment of the Holy Spirit.

Some of you may remember that I have related to you my experience at one time, when my mind was greatly exercised on this promise, how I told the Lord I could not believe it. It was contrary to my conscious experience, and I could not believe anything which contradicted my conscious experience. At that time the Lord kindly and in great mercy rebuked my unbelief, and showed me that the fault was altogether mine, and in no part his.

Multitudes pray for the Spirit as I had done, and are in like manner disappointed because they do not get it. They are not conscious of being hypocrites; but they do not thoroughly know their own spirits. They think they are ready to make any sacrifices to obtain it. They do not seem to know that the difficulty is all with them. They fail to realise how rich and full the promise is. It all seems to them quite unaccountable that their prayer should not be answered. Often they sweat with agony of mind in their efforts to solve this mystery. They cannot bear to say that God's word is false, and they cannot see that it is true. It is apparently contradicted by their experience. This fact creates the agonising perplexity.

5. In the next place, how can we reconcile this experience with Christ's veracity? How can we explain this experience according to the facts in the case, and yet

show that Christ's teachings are to be taken in their obvious sense, and are strictly true?

I answer, What is here taught as to prayer must be taken in connection with what is taught elsewhere. For example, what is here said of asking must be taken in connection with what is said of praying in faith -- with what is said by James of asking and not receiving because men ask amiss, that they may consume it upon their lusts. If any of you were to frame a will or a promissory note, binding yourself or your administrators to pay over certain moneys, on certain specified conditions, you would not think it necessary to state the conditions more than once. Having stated them distinctly once, you would go on to state in detail the promise; but you would not expect anybody to separate the promise from the condition, and then claim the promise without having fulfilled the condition, and even perhaps accuse you of falsehood because you did not fulfil the promise when the conditions had not been met.

Now, the fact is that we find, scattered throughout the Bible, various revealed conditions of prayer. Whoever would pray acceptably must surely fulfil not merely a part, but all of these conditions. Yet in practice, the church, to a great extent, has overlooked, or at least has failed to meet these conditions. For example, they often pray for the Holy Spirit for selfish reasons. This is fearfully common. The real motives are selfish. Yet they come before God and urge their request often and long, perhaps with great importunity; yet they are selfish in their very prayers, and God cannot hear. They are not in their inmost souls ready to do or to suffer all God's holy will. God calls some of his children through long seasons of extremest suffering, obviously as a means of purifying their hearts; yet many pray for pure hearts, and for the Spirit to purify their hearts, who would rebel at once if God should answer their prayers by means of such a course of providence. Or God may see it necessary to crucify your love of reputation, and for this end may subject you to a course of trial which will blow your reputation to the winds of heaven. Are you ready to hail the blessings of a subdued, unselfish heart, even though it be given by means of such discipline?

Often your motive in asking for the Spirit is merely personal comfort and consolation -- as if you would live all your spiritual life on sweetmeats. Others ask for it really as a matter of self-glorification. They would like to have their names emblazoned in the papers. It would be so gratifying to be held up as a miracle of grace -- as a most remarkable Christian. Alas, how many, in various

forms of it, are only offering selfish prayers! Even a minister might pray for the Holy Spirit from only sinister motives. He might wish to have it said that he is very spiritual, or a man of great spiritual power in his preaching or his praying; or he might wish to avoid that hard study to which a man who has not the Spirit must submit, since the Spirit does not teach him, nor give him unction. He might almost wish to be inspired, so easy would this gift make his preaching and his study. He might suppose that he really longed to be filled with the Spirit, while really he is only asking amiss, to consume it on some unhallowed desire. A student may pray for the Spirit to help him study, and yet only his ambition or his indolence may have inspired that prayer. Let it never be forgotten, we must sympathise with God's reasons for our having the Spirit, as we would hope to pray acceptably. There is nothing mysterious about this matter. The great end of all God's spiritual administrations towards us in providence or grace is to divest us of selfishness, and to bring our hearts into harmony with his in the spirit of real love.

Persons often quench the Spirit even while they are praying for it. One prays for the Spirit, yet that very moment fails to notice the Spirit's monitions in his own breast, or refuses to do what the Spirit would lead and press him to do. Perhaps they even pray for the Spirit, that this gift may be a substitute for some self-denying duty to which the Spirit has long been urging them. This is no uncommon experience. Such persons will be very likely to think it very difficult to get the Spirit. A woman was going to a female prayer-meeting, and thought she wanted the Holy Spirit, and would make that her special errand at that meeting. Yet when there, the Spirit pressed her to pray audibly and she resisted, and excused herself.

It is common for persons to resist the Spirit in the very steps he chooses to take. They would make the Spirit yield to them; he would have them yield to him. They think only of having their blessings come in the way of their own choosing; he is wiser and will do it in his own way or not at all. If they cannot accept of his way, there can be no agreement. Often when persons pray for the Spirit, they have in their minds certain things which they would dictate to him as to the manner and circumstances. Such ought to know that if they would have the Spirit, they must accept him in his own way. Let him lead, and consider that your business is to follow. Thus it not infrequently happens that professed Christians maintain a perpetual resistance against the Holy Spirit, even while they are ostensibly praying for his presence and power. When he would fain

draw them, they are thinking of dictating to him, and refuse to be led by him in his way. When they come really to understand what is implied in being filled with the Spirit, they draw back. It is more and different from what they had thought. *That* is not what they wanted.

REMARKS.

1. The difficulty is always, and all of it in us, not in God. You may write this down as a universal truth, from which there can be no exceptions.

2. The difficulty lies in our voluntary state of mind, and not in anything which is involuntary and beyond our control. Therefore, there is no excuse for our retaining it, and it should be at once given up.

There is no difficulty in our obtaining the Holy Spirit if we are willing to have it; but this implies a willingness to surrender ourselves to his direction and discretion.

3. We often mistake other states of mind for a willingness to have the Spirit of God. Nothing is more common than this. Men think they are willing to be filled with the Spirit, and to have that Spirit do all its own work in the soul; but they are really under a great mistake. To be willing to be wholly crucified to the world and the world unto us, is by no means common. Many think they have a sort of desire for this state, who would really shrink from it if they saw the reality near at hand. That persons do make continual mistakes, and think themselves willing to be fully controlled by the Spirit, when they are not, is evident from their lives. The will governs the life, and therefore, the life must be an infallible index of the real state of the will. As is the life, so is the will, and therefore, when you see the life alien from God, you must infer that the will is not wholly consecrated to his service -- is not wholly in sympathy with God's will.

4. When the will is really on God's altar, entirely yielded up to God's will in all respects, one will not wait long ere he has the Spirit of God in the fullest measure. Indeed, this very consecration itself implies a large measure of the Spirit, yet not the *largest* measure. The mind may not be conscious of that deep union with God into which it may enter. The knowledge of God is a consciousness of God in the soul.

You may certainly know that God's Spirit is within you, and that his light

illumines your mind. His presence becomes a conscious reality.

The manner in which spiritual agencies other than human manifest themselves in the mind of man, seems to some very mysterious. It is not necessary that we should know *how* those agencies got access to our minds; it suffices us to know, beyond all question, that they do. Christians sometimes know that the devil brings his own thoughts into the very chambers of their souls. Some of you have been painfully conscious of this. You have been certain that the devil has poured out his spirit upon you. Most horrid suggestions are thrust upon your mind -- such as your inmost soul abhors, and such as could come from no other, and certainly from no *better* source than the devil.

Now, if the devil can thus make us conscious of his presence and power, and can throw upon our souls his own horrid suggestions, may not the Spirit of God reveal his? Nay, if your heart is in sympathy with his suggestions and monitions, may he not do much more? Surely none can doubt that he can make his presence and agency a matter of positive consciousness. That must be a very imperfect and even false view of the case which supposes that we can be conscious of nothing but the operations of our own minds. Men are often conscious of Satan's thoughts, as present to their minds: a fact which Bunyan well illustrated where he supposes Christian to be alarmed by some one whispering in his ear behind him, and pouring horrid blasphemies into his mind. Cases often occur like the following: A man came to me in great distress, saying, "I am no Christian, I know of a certainty. My mind has been filled with awful thoughts of God." "But were those awful thoughts *your own* thoughts, and did you cherish them and give your assent to them?" "No, indeed; nothing could have agonised me more." "That is the work of the devil," said I. "Well," said he, "perhaps it is, and yet I had not thought of it so before."

So God's Spirit within us may become no less an object of our distinct consciousness. And if you do truly and earnestly wait on God, you shall be most abundantly supplied of his fullness.

5. To be filled with the Holy Ghost, so that he takes full possession of our souls, is what I mean by sanctification. This glorious work is wrought by the Spirit of God; and that Spirit never can take full and entire possession of our hearts without accomplishing this blessed work.

I do not wonder that those persons deny the existence of any such state as

sanctification who do not know anything of being filled with the Holy Ghost. Ignoring his glorious agency, we need not wonder that they have no knowledge of his work in the soul.

6. Often the great difficulty in the way of Christian progress is an utter want of watchfulness. Some are so given to talking that they cannot hold communion with the Spirit of God. They have no leisure to listen to his "still small voice." Some are so fond of laughter, it seems impossible that their minds should ever be in a really serious frame. In such a mind, how can the Spirit of God dwell? Often in our theological discussions, I am pained to see how difficult it is for persons engaged in dispute and mutual discussion to avoid being chafed. Some of them are watchful and prayerful against this temptation, yet sometimes, we see persons manifestly fall before this temptation. If Christians do not shut down the gate against all abuse of the tongue, and, indeed, against every form of selfishness, there is no hope that they will resist the devil and the world so far as to be conquerors at last.

7. The Spirit of God troubles or comforts us, according as we resist or receive this great gift. The gospel scheme was purposed for the end of accomplishing this complete union and sympathy between our souls and God, so that the soul should enjoy God's own peace, and should be in the utmost harmony with its Maker and Father. Hence it is the great business of the Spirit to bring about this state. If we concur, and if our will harmonises with his efforts, he comforts us; if we resist, he troubles us -- a struggle ensues: if, in this struggle, we come to understand God, and submit, then his blessings come freely and our peace is as a river; but so long as we resist, there can be no fruit of the Spirit's labour to us, but rebuke and trouble. To us he cannot be the author of peace and comfort.

8. How abominable to God it must be for the church to take ground, in regard to the Spirit, which practically denies the truth of this great promise in our text! How dreadful that Christians should hold and teach that it is a hard thing to be really religious! What abominable unbelief! How forcibly does the church thus testify *against* God before the world! You might as well burn your Bible as deny that it is the easiest thing in the world to get the gift of the Spirit. And yet, strange to tell, some hold that God is so sovereign, and is sovereign in such a sense, that few can get the Spirit at all, and those few only as it may happen, and not by any means as the result of provision freely made and promise reliably revealed, on which any man's faith may take hold. Oh, how does this notion of

sovereignty contradict the Bible! How long shall it be so?

Do you, young people, really believe that your young hearts may be filled with the Spirit? Do you really believe, as our text says, that God is more willing to give his Spirit to those that ask him, than your own father or mother would be to give you good things? Many of you are here, far from your parents. But you know that even your widowed mother, much as she may need every cent of her means for herself, would gladly share the last one with you if you needed it. So would your earthly father. Do you really believe that God is as willing as *they* -- *as ready* -- *as loving?* Nay, is he not *much* more so? As much more as he is better than your father or your mother? And now, do you really need and desire this gift of the Spirit? And if you do, will you come and ask for it in full confidence that you have a real *Father* in heaven?

Do you find practical difficulties? Do you realise how much you dishonour God if you refuse to believe his word of promise? Some of you say, I am so poor and so much in debt, I must go away and work somewhere and get money. But you have a father who has money enough. Yes; but he will not help me. He loves his money more than he loves his son. Would not this be a great scandal to your father -- a living disgrace to him? Surely, it would; and you would be so keenly sensible of this that you would not say it if it were not *very* true, nor then unless some very strong circumstances seemed to require of you the painful testimony. If your mother, being amply able, yet would not help you in your education or in your sickness, you would hardly tell of it, so greatly would it discredit her character.

And now will you have the face to say, God does not love me; he does not want to educate me for heaven; he utterly refuses to give me the Holy Spirit, although I often ask him and beseech him to do so? Will you *even think* this? And can you go even farther and act it out before all the world? Oh, why should you thus dishonour your own God and Father!

XXV. AFFLICTIONS OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." -- 2 Cor. 4:17. Read also Psalm 73.

FEW things are more interesting than to contemplate the contrast everywhere drawn in the Bible between the righteous and the wicked. No man can thoroughly study this contrast without being greatly affected by it. Throughout the Bible we find this contrast drawn in the strongest colours respecting their character, their afflictions, their joys, their entire earthly course, and their final destiny. It is my design in this discourse to notice some particulars.

Our text from St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians speaks of the righteous. It affirms that their afflictions are light, are transient, and productive of augmented glory. We have another passage of similar import which asserts that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

The Bible throughout holds language directly opposite to this, respecting the wicked.

I. But I am, first, to give a few particulars respecting the case of the righteous.

1. They have afflictions. This is asserted and implied throughout the Bible. And the whole course of God's providence in every age teaches the same things. The best saints are chastened. Affliction is not excluded from their cup because of their piety. Their afflictions may be in themselves as painful -- may be as frequent and as long protracted -- as those which befall the wicked.

The book of Job shows that formerly this fact was greatly misunderstood. In those times of comparative darkness, when the light of written revelation had scarcely begun to fall upon the nations, some men, even some good men, seemed not to have understood the meaning of the divine dispensation towards the righteous.

But I have several specific points of remark to make respecting the afflictions of the righteous.

(1) They are light. Paul calls it, "Our light affliction." This, you will observe, is a term of comparison. We need therefore to inquire with what our afflictions are to

be compared in order to be reasonably deemed light.

Obviously the afflictions of the righteous are light compared with what they know and feel that themselves deserve. This is one of the considerations which make their afflictions seem, in their own view, to be light.

Their afflictions are not said to be light compared with whose of the wicked; but they are light, and every real saint feels them to be so, compared with what himself deserves.

Again, they are light compared with what Christ suffered in working out our salvation. Whenever we think of Christ's circumstances, apprehending in some measure his trials from being rejected of his people, from the unbelief and fickleness of his professed friends, from the wickedness and coming ruin of his nation (which he could neither remedy nor avert), from the malice of his murderers, and from his position as our sacrifice, when, I say, we duly apprehend such points as these, we always see that all our own utmost afflictions are light compared with his. I have never yet seen a Christian who did not feel this when reminded of the sufferings endured by Christ in his earthly afflictions.

Again, these afflictions are light when compared with those that await the wicked. Compared with those, they are too small to admit of being estimated as anything at all. They are less than the fine dust of the balance.

In the same view, these afflictions of the righteous are light compared with what they themselves must have suffered if Christ had not suffered in their stead, and if they should not, by the discipline of suffering here, be so purified that God can take them to heaven at death. It is well for all Christians to consider both these points; namely, how the sufferings of Christ have saved them from the terrible necessity of everlasting anguish, and also how the moral discipline of suffering here may perform a most important and indispensable agency in preparing the soul for exemption from all further suffering in a world of peace and joy. Then you will see how light your afflictions are compared with what they might have been, and indeed must have been, if God had forborne to adopt the great remedial system.

(2) I must pass to remark that these afflictions of the righteous are *short*. They are short compared with eternity; short compared with what we deserve that they should be; short compared with the measureless duration of the sufferings of the

wicked. Let their duration be compared with any of these points, and you cannot fail to see that they are indeed but for a moment.

(3) All these afflictions of the righteous are, in respect to them, *means of grace*. So the apostle implies. In his view they "work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." They do this only as they serve to prepare the soul for glory; by no means because they merit a reward of glory. But in their disciplinary character and results, they work for the Christian a weight of glory which infinitely exceeds all the weight of the afflictions themselves.

(4) The perceived design and tendency of these afflictions rob them of their sting. When the people of God see this design and this tendency, they feel more like embracing and kissing the rod than like repelling it. Indeed it usually happens that they can testify after the scene of trial is past, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." And often, while passing through the very furnace, the conviction that the hand of their own Father is in it; that it is designed for their good; and if they will fall in with this kind design, it cannot fail to do them infinite good; these thoughts serve to sustain them, so that not so much as the smell of fire is on them. Or to change the figure, these thoughts, dropped as an anodyne into the cup of their sorrows, transform what else had been gall and wormwood, to the sweetness of honey.

(5) A consciousness of their own ill-desert serves to inspire patience and submission. Let the Christian only realise this, and he will cry out, All these afflictions are nothing compared to what I have deserved at the hand of God. I cannot murmur. All this is no suffering at all when seen in the light of my deservings.

(6) The fact that they are so short makes them appear so light. With almost universal application, it may be said of the afflictions of the righteous, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." A night of unbroken sorrow may appear long; but soon the morning comes in its joy, the night of anguish is forgotten. What Christian does not know this? Where is the Christian who has not had this written out in his own experience? Hence, under the heaviest pressure of affliction, he can still expostulate with his own despondencies, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me; hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God."

I can well recollect that, before my own conversion, I was deeply struck with this, that Christians were the only persons in the world who had any reason to be joyful. I could easily see that they had consolations which none others had. I saw that nothing could possibly befall them which could ultimately be an evil. All things, I saw, must work good, and nothing but good for them. Reading such passages as our text, showed me plainly that all was well for them, and that they alone, of all men on the earth, had a legitimate right to be joyful.

The opposite, I saw, must be true in every instance in the case of the wicked. All these thoughts passed often through my mind while in my law office. Even then I could not help thinking intensely on these points, nor could I help seeing the force and the bearing of earthly afflictions to curse the wicked and to bless and not harm the righteous. In this state of my mind, I did not perhaps quite envy Christians their lot, but I felt that none but they had any reason to be cheerful. The sinner, I plainly saw, had no business to be cheerful. Nothing could benefit his condition and prospects but to howl and mourn in most hopeless anguish. Nothing but ill was on him; nothing but ill yet more awful was before him.

Nor in my case did those views result from a state of melancholy or depression of spirits. I never had any tendencies of that sort. These convictions were the result of sober and intense thought. I studied the great questions of the Christian religion intensely, and I could not fail of being deeply impressed with the mighty contrast between the state of the righteous even in this world, and that of the wicked.

My situation in regard to early religious instruction was rather peculiar. I heard no preaching but the strongest form of Old Schoolism, and had to grope my way along through all its absurdities, and think out all my religious opinions in the very face of all the preaching I heard in my earliest years. This led me to think deeply and thoroughly upon the great points of the Christian life. Hence, when I saw a sinner in his sins, I could see nothing cheerful in his case. All was full of gloom. But a Christian -- what if he does suffer now? All will soon be well. His sufferings are soon over. Who can help seeing this? It seems to me now, as it did then, quite impossible for any thinking man to avoid thinking on this subject, and if he thinks at all, how can he fail of being struck with the immense contrast between the case of the righteous and that of the wicked?

2. The joys of the saints are only the beginning of heaven. The Bible does not

represent them as being short, like their sorrows; but represents their joys as long, and their grief as short. Their joys are enduring, deep, full, fadeless; not light and fleeting, as are those of the sinner.

II. I pass, in the next place, to remark that precisely the opposite in every respect is said in the Bible of the sinner. To show this I will read you the seventy-third Psalm. I select this, not because it is more striking or more decisive than many other passages in the Bible on the same subject, but because it brings out more distinctly the very truths I wish to lay before you.

It appears that before the volume of written revelation was filled up, and before men had learned to interpret the providences of God as now, in the light of revelation, we are enabled to do, some men were greatly perplexed with the course of divine providence towards the righteous and the wicked. Such seems to have been for a time the case with the writer of this seventy-third Psalm. "Truly," he says, "truly God is good to Israel;" -- "truly," as if the conviction had just now become fixed in his mind, and he had just learned this fact, so long obscured in darkness, "truly God is good to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped." What was the matter? He proceeds at once to tell us. "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." He evidently speaks not of all wicked men, for some of them have trouble as other men have; but he speaks of the prosperous classes -- of those who seem, during much of their life, to have all that heart can wish. "Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return thither; and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." It is all in vain, he says, for me to have washed my hands from sin, and to have denied myself its pleasures, for I have been sorely plagued notwithstanding -- more sorely even than most of these wicked men; "for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." But at this point he checks himself; it strikes his mind that to talk in this strain

will be a stumbling-block to God's people; it will throw them into the same state of perplexity and repining; and he sees instantly that this will not answer. What then shall I do? says he, "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; I was yet more painfully perplexed; I dared not speak out my feelings, least I should offend the generation of God's children. And yet my heart was hot within me, and how could I refrain from speaking out the deep, burning perplexities of my soul?" "It was too painful for me until I went into the sanctuary of God;" I knew not how to solve this mystery, that I should have so many troubles and the wicked so few -- "until I went to the sanctuary, then I understood their end." "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee." I was stupid as a beast; why did I not understand before this that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and that their richest joys terminate almost in a twinkling, in everlasting desolation and anguish? "Nevertheless, I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." "Thou shalt guide me." What a blessing to have the infinitely wise God for a guide! "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish, thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works."

We see now that, if sinners are joyful, the Bible represents their joy as only for a moment. I might quote passages almost without number to prove this. But there is no need that I should.

On the other hand, the Bible shows that when Christians are afflicted it is but for a moment, and that their afflictions are light also. Oh, how light compared with the full lot of the wicked!

But what of the wicked man; is he joyful? Yes; he has a feverish excitement and he calls it joy, but it cannot last; it vanishes away ere he has done quaffing off the mere foam of his pleasure-cup. Light too are all his joys -- light as air; in their very nature they never can be solid and substantial; they are as the chaff which

the wind drives away. Sinner, you know there is nothing in them worthy of the name of joy. You know they are vain, false, fickle, unsatisfactory; the first breath of adversity scatters them all; disappointment has hidden her sting beneath their fairest flowers. You have known all this in your own sad experience, and yet you are loath to admit it, and more loath still to act as if it were true.

Again, the sinner's joys are only the means of aggravating his future sorrows. Instead of being, as in the case of the righteous, an antepast of heaven, they are a prelude to hell. Every joy of the sinner in this world is a fruit of God's mercy, and every such mercy abused will be prolific in wrath and torments in the world of retribution. God will visit for all those abused mercies.

Then, moreover, those joys of earth will be food for thought in that world of tormenting self-reflections. Conscious guilt for mercies abused will harrow up the soul of the lost sinner with unutterable pangs.

Yet again, every sinner knows that his good things are the opposite of what he deserves. The sweet consciousness of integrity, and of deserving well at the hand of God, he never has, or can have. He knows that all in his case is ill-desert -- desert of utter and unmingled sorrows.

Once more. In the hour of trial, how great the contrast between the afflictions of the wicked and those of the righteous! The wicked man under his afflictions can only say, if his eyes are open, These are only the beginnings of my sorrow. I have only just begun to drink the bitter cup, the dregs of which are to be my portion for ever and ever.

Yes; the wicked must bear their sufferings in this life, comfortless and unsustained. No Christian's hope gladdens and cheers their heart. No solace can they have in the bitter hour. Faith in Christ is with them entirely out of the question; they can think of Christ only as the being whose blood they have trampled under foot -- whose mediation for sinners they have set at naught; and now they can hear Him say only this, "Because I have called, and ye refused, therefore when ye call, I will not answer." It avails nothing to speak to them of Jesus. The name soothes not their aching bosoms; it only harrows up their souls with more bitter self-reproaches, and keener despair. No hope have they -- certainly no good hope through grace; for they have set all grace at naught.

Thus the very opposite things are true of their afflictions which are true in the

case of the righteous. While the afflictions of the righteous are light, because of his buoyant, trusting, submissive, peaceful state of mind; the afflictions of the wicked are heavy because of his wicked state of mind. He has no power to resist and bear up under them.

Suppose an ungodly man is visited with bereavement. His property is torn away. Alas, it is his all! and what has he more? This was his God, and now it is gone, perhaps for ever. It leaves him no good to enjoy. The Christian too may lose all his property in a twinkling; but then his Father in heaven is infinitely rich, and he need not fear least he come to want. His great treasure remains untouched by the fires or the floods of earth. He can have a thousand angels to minister to his wants, if he needs their aid, and his Father sees it best to send them.

Suppose the sinner is bereaved of some dear friend, a parent or a bosom companion, or a child of his strong and tender love. The blow comes down upon him with unmitigated weight. He has no Saviour, no hope, no consolation, no being in the universe able to save, to whom he can flee.

These sorrows are heavy because they are enduring. They intermit only for a brief space, and then another avalanche rolls over him again, crushing all his fondest hopes and spreading desolation all around him. And then the thought must flash across his mind, *These are only the beginning of sorrows*. I am bereaved here; oh, how much more bereaved, when every friend shall be torn away! Bereavement makes me wretched now; what shall I be hereafter?

There is another point of most solemn import. The wicked man's afflictions, instead of working for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, will only work in his case a far more exceeding and eternal weight of damnation; for all these afflictions are only appliances on the part of God to reclaim the sinner from sinning and bring him to Jesus for salvation. If he resists them all, they cannot fail to aggravate his final doom. Hence the more thorough and searching his trials, the greater his guilt, and the more heavy his final punishment. Hence we see that the more he suffers here supposing him to resist the design of God to reclaim him by these trials, the more must he suffer hereafter as a punishment for his deeper guilt.

The reverse of this, we know, is true of the Christian; as, the more he suffers here, the more he enjoys hereafter.

It is most striking to notice here that, while all things, joyful or sad, work together for good to the Christian, all things, whether prosperous or adverse -- joyous or afflictive, work together for ill to the sinner. The more he enjoys here, the more miserable he must be hereafter; and the more he suffers here, the more he must suffer hereafter. If there is in this an apparent paradox, it is still true, and you will instantly see its truth when you come to see the relation of the whole course of God's providence here towards the sinner, to this sinner's final doom. All God's provinces are means of trial to the sinner, and if he abuses them all, and resists their influence, they cannot fail to work for him a deeper damnation.

Alas, the guilty course and the fearful end of the sinner! Instead of being able to say, with the Christian, Welcome, afflictions; welcome, pains and trials and bereavements; welcome, even the cross itself; he can only say, Woe is me! These heavy afflictions, that make me weary of life now, are working for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of damnation! Nothing for me here but bitterness, and a vain pursuit of hollow pleasures, all working for me a more dire damnation for my everlasting portion!

REMARKS.

1. If we would understand the Bible, we must attain a position from which we shall see things as the inspired writers saw them. *They estimated all things in the light of eternity*. When they speak of earthly things, they compare them with eternity, and deem them long or short -- valuable or valueless, as they are estimated in this scale of comparison. And why should they not? If we are to exist for ever, there is surely no other rational way of estimating the value of whatever shall affect our entire well-being. Our happiness or misery in the next world is a part of the whole sum of our good or ill in existence, as much as the portion which falls to us in this world.

Hence, if earthly scenes and interests are brief and but for a moment, compared with eternity, let them be called and deemed light and of small account. So the sacred writers seemed to regard them.

Many have fallen into serious errors in consequence of not understanding this. When the apostles speak of its being only a step to the day of judgment, some have supposed their real meaning to be that Christ's second advent was really just about to occur. But it is by no means certain that this was their real meaning. Minds so deeply impressed as theirs were with the solemn realities of eternity,

are wont to view eternal scenes as very near at hand. The intervention of earthly scenes and events between -- events in which their mind takes no interest -- is scarcely thought of.

Now we need to be in such a state of mind as theirs, in order to understand their language. Then we shall estimate all earthly things in the near view of the solemn realities of the eternal world.

2. Afflictions are light or otherwise, very much according to the state of mind in which they are experienced. In one state, a mere trifle will appear heavy; in another state, the same trial will seem scarce worth regarding. The mind sustained of God can sustain almost anything God shall lay upon it; but when a man has all his own burdens to carry alone, and can scarcely bear the burden of his own wounded spirit and rebellious, repining heart, how can he bear the superadded weight of affliction?

3. It is often exceedingly interesting to contemplate the afflictions of the righteous. When we see the afflicted soul sustained triumphantly by grace, and consider also how these light afflictions must educe a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, we see it a most blessed thing to be afflicted. Oh it is a joyful scene! Their state of mind is such that they scarcely feel the pain of their afflictions. They know themselves to be blessed, and their souls sometimes exult in scenes of deep affliction with exceeding joy. They have so much of God in their souls, God takes occasion by means of the affliction to make such peculiar manifestations of his glory and his goodness to their souls, that they may well exult in the precious good of being afflicted.

You may have heard it said of one of the daughters of President Edwards, that, while a husband whom she tenderly loved lay a corpse in the house, her joy was so great that she sought some secret place to give it vent, lest it should be misconstrued by those who could not appreciate the abounding consolations of the great joy with which God was pleased to fill her soul. Now what was this? How shall we account for it? But one rational account can be given. The Lord was pleased to make this affliction in her case a sort of conductor, along which the electric fires of his own love and presence reached and filled her soul. She became so filled with the joys of the Spirit that she could not be sensible to the bitterness of grief.

Now another woman in a different state of mind would have hung over that

lifeless body -- would have bathed it with her bitter tears -- would have given way to inconsolable grief. Why? Because, in her state of mind, the consolations and joys of God are wanting.

Payson, you may recollect, said, near the close of his life; "Since I have given up my will, I have never in a single instance been disappointed." You need only be in a state in, which you have no will but God's, then all will be well with you. Form no purpose except on this condition: "If the Lord will, I shall do this or that." Let a man get into this permanent state of mind, and where is he? Where he never can be disappointed. However his plans may issue, all seems well to him, because he wishes nothing otherwise than God would have it, and God's ways can never be frustrated; as a man once said of the weather, when asked what he thought the weather would be, "just such as pleases me." But how could he know this? What does this mean? The answer is easy. Said he, "It will be such weather as pleases God, I know; and whatever pleases God will perfectly please me." Thus, beloved, if you are only weaned thoroughly from your own wills, and moulded into sweet submission to the will of God, everything will go just right. However much the course of divine Providence may seem to frustrate your plans, and threaten mischief to your interests, you can say: "This pleases my Heavenly Father, and therefore I know it is best, and it shall please me."

I very distinctly recollect attending a funeral in a case where a man had lost a most beloved wife by a sudden death. But, oh, there was such a smile on his countenance, a smile so calm, so resigned, so sweet, so like heaven -- I never can forget it. Such a countenance as his, it seemed to betoken anything else but affliction. Why? His heart was with God.

4. But while this is all joyful and interesting, on the contrary, all is agonising when you come to see the wicked under affliction. Alas! they have no consolation. I once witnessed a funeral scene in New York. A most ungodly man died, leaving two ungodly daughters fatherless. Their mother had died before, and they felt themselves thrown upon a blank world, orphans. They wept and wailed enough to move a heart of stone. Their tears and cries were agonising. I felt unutterable anguish as I saw their forlorn, despairing grief. But I could do little else than stand and weep. I talked to them of Jesus, but they had no Jesus. This name, so dear to the Christian heart, had no charms to them. They did not know him. They had never learned to trust him; they had never made him their friend. Alas, they had no friend in the universe! Their father had gone to hell,

and they were following on in the same path. Oh, it was enough to tear a man's heart all to pieces to witness such a scene! I could not help crying out, Oh, were they only Christians! Oh, if they only had Jesus for their friend!

But these are only the beginning of sorrows. These are only the first tastings of that bitter cup which to all eternity they must drink to its dregs. These are only the first drops of that awful, rising, gathering hailstorm, about to whelm them in its wide wasting ruin. If you have ever seen the awful tornado, rolling up in its mountain masses of cloud and hail from the west, roaring, crashing, sweeping along; now its first drops fall -- it is coming, coming -- even these first drops thrill through the quick pulse and the beating heart of the houseless, naked wanderer -- ah, how can he bear that rushing avalanche of storm!

To the sinner in this world, the few drops of affliction cut him down; he cannot stand before these few small drops; how can he stand when God shall make bare his awful arm, and clothe it with majesty, to visit wrath upon the guilty according to their deeds? O sinner, how can thy heart endure, or thy hands be strong, in the day when God shall deal with thee? The first drops crush you down; you cannot bear even the first small drop, but sink and wail out under even these; what next? Next comes the solid hail -- hear it roar. Oh, that crash -- as if it would tear the world in pieces! The first drops scattered in this world scald and scathe him -- ah, surely he never can endure in that dread day when the storms of Jehovah's wrath shall begin to beat for ever on his guilty spirit!

When I have seen sinners under conviction, gnawing their very tongues literally as I have seen it drawing blood, I have cried out in the inward anguish of my soul, If this is conviction, *what is hell?* O my soul, WHAT IS HELL? No hope; no hope, no end, no escape; oh, if there were only some way of escape, or some end, though after myriads of ages had rolled away in the agonies of the second death; then it would not be all utter, hopeless despair. These thoughts of final relief might come as the elixir of life to bring at least a few drops of comfort; but no! hell has no hopes for its doomed ones; it has no balm for the wounded spirits of its guilty, self-ruined victims. Every thought in every sinner's mind there is only the fire and the gall of hell upon the dark, malign spirits of that prison-house of despair!

5. Finally, brethren, let me say, it is exceedingly useful to us to contemplate this contrast between the earthly state of the righteous and of the wicked. Let Christians do this often and thoroughly. I have found it exceedingly useful to me

to do it. It quickens the deep sympathies of my heart for my dying fellowmen, and calls forth gushing gratitude for the mercies of gospel salvation. It is sometimes an evil to dwell too long and too exclusively upon the Christian's hope and the Christian's heaven, and neglect to dwell upon the bitter doom of the wicked. Oh, we must not forget their awful state! Our business here is to pull them out of those fires. Then let our hearts feel their awful peril. Let us often follow out this striking, heart-affecting contrast between the righteous and the wicked. If ministers would often do this, carrying out this contrast in all its great and striking points, oh, how would both they and their churches travail in birth for souls, and be filled with unutterable emotions of benevolent solicitude for the souls of the perishing!

Brethren, do you satisfy yourselves with the dainties of the Christian life, and live to eat, rather than to labour and toil? Do you come up here to this sanctuary to regale yourselves with spiritual manna, and give no crumbs to those who must starve in the agonies of the second death? Do you lose sight of the sorrows of the wicked, and quite forget their case? Do you -- can you forget their awful afflictions here and hereafter -- so heavy, so enduring, so fearful? Oh! can you let these things pass from your minds, and live on as if all were well? Beloved, *you must one day give account for souls -- for souls saved or lost.*